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FROM WASHINGTON

Uncle Sam doesn't want you

So I'm sitting in my office minding my own business a few weeks back, reading a report from the Congressional Budget Office, as is my wont of a brisk fall afternoon, when Will Davenport calls, very agitated, from Knoxville, Tennessee. Mr. Davenport, who is a stranger, says he is about to turn 40.

I say I know the feeling.

Well, he says, he was watching the Civil War documentary on PBS and was overcome by the desire to serve his country.

And you're calling me, I interrupt triumphantly, because you were inspired by my recent column about the Civil War and the need for national purpose.

No, actually, he is unaware of that column. He is calling me because he wants to enlist in the Army and fight in the Persian Gulf. But he has been told by his local Army recruiter that he is too old. Various politicians' offices have given him the polite brush-off. He is looking for some strings to pull, and he thinks that I might have an in with his senator, Al Gore. A perfectly reasonable assumption for any regular reader of THE NEW REPUBLIC, but not, alas, correct. Nevertheless, we chat.

Mr. Davenport is a bouillabaisse of yuppie emotions, all of them honorable, many all too familiar. Facing 40 naturally induces morose contemplation. Another factor, Mr. Davenport admits, is "the adolescent and probably very foolish idea that a real man becomes a soldier for a while." With no special exertion, he avoided service during Vietnam. He doesn't really regret this, because he thinks that war was wrong. But he does feel he missed something important. And he shares the widespread concern that in Vietnam and again in the Gulf, the fighting and dying is done by poor boys (and now girls) while those of what he calls "a better background" escape. During the 1980s he worked in California as an electrical engineer on the Stealth bomber. He was struck that even most of the people building America's weapons had no firsthand knowledge of war.

In the Vietnam debate, which will never end, the fact that the elite escaped most of the bloodshed has been invoked by both hawks and doves: the hawks to sneer that real American boys made the sacrifice while the fancy pants protested; the doves to say that the war would never have gone on so long if the Establishment's children were dying. Mr. Davenport's views are closer to the latter. But he is uncomfortable with the Vietnam era's rejection of all things military, and he is intrigued by the idea of a citizen army, such as both sides of the Civil War, which even elected their own officers.

Not part of Mr. Davenport's thinking is any great enthusiasm for President Bush's purposes in the Gulf enterprise. Indeed, when I talk to him more recently, to see how his quest is progressing, he concedes that he has become "cooler on thumping Saddam Hussein." But he still feels that a "Woodstock Brigade" (his nice term) in the Persian Gulf, which he could join, would be good for him and good for the country. He says a lot of the soldiers he sees on TV look about his age.

Most of us may not share Mr. Davenport's eccentric determination. But his general feelings touch a chord. And what aging yupster will not feel aggrieved to discover that he is considered too old for military service? After all, what have we been jogging for all these years? But a call to a local Army recruiting office confirms the insult. The lady on the phone says pleasantly but firmly that she is not interested in my business unless I am under age 35. "And if it's just a couple days before your thirty-fifth birthday, we couldn't get you in," she adds with unnecessary cruelty. If I want to be an officer, it's even worse: the age limit for enlistment is 29.

The recruiter says she hears from one or two overaged would-be enlistees a week. A senatorial aide who specializes in military casework says he gets ten to fifteen inquiries of this sort a month. The Woodstock Brigade awaits the call.

But Mr. Davenport has chosen the worst possible moment to have his crisis of conscience. The biggest personnel challenge to the military right now is getting rid of people. Under the recent budget agreement, the uniformed services will be reduced by 425,000 over the next five years, out of a current total of slightly more than 2 million. The problem will be finding ways to keep people who have

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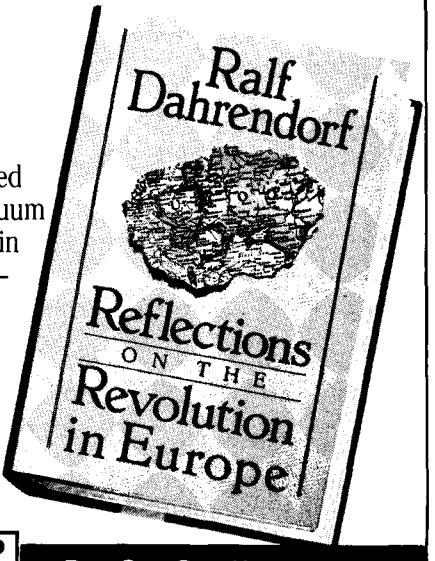

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chosen a military career and have been trained at great expense.

This particular dilemma illustrates the larger irony facing all proposals, such as reviving the draft, intended to address concerns about the isolation of military from society in general and decision-making elites in particular. The services don't need more people. Anyone who enters the military against his will or out of a guilty conscience will take the place of someone who is there for more practical reasons. That person may not be grateful to be shut out so that some yuppie can enjoy an egalitarian moral frisson.

Colonel Lamar Crosby, a personnel manager in the office of the secretary of defense, denies that the current all-volunteer force is unrepresentative. He says it draws in rough proportion from all socioeconomic groups. But why is it, then, that practically no one in the White House, Congress, the Washington press corps, and so on has a family member serving in the Gulf? According to Colonel Crosby, the explanation is that the absolute numbers are so small, compared with earlier military festivities like World War II. It's not skewed demographics.

Well, since I've got you on the phone, could a 39-year-old guy be of service in Saudi Arabia? Colonel Crosby is doubtful. Contrary to Mr. Davenport's impression, very few infantrymen in Project Desert Shield are even over 30, let alone approaching 40. (Like many folks our age, Mr. Davenport is losing his ability to judge the age of younger people.) "It's been shown time and again that war is a young man's game," the Colonel says. Yes, it was different in the Civil War. But by World War I and World War II we had learned our lesson. The Colonel goes on to a brisk discussion of things like "going days without sleep or rest . . . in a combat environment" that leaves me feeling Will Davenport's years.

Anyway, the Colonel adds, things are moving pretty fast in the Middle East and it would take sixteen weeks of training before he could get there. Then he'd be even older, I traitorously volunteer. "He'd be a *lot* older," says the Colonel.

Point made. But couldn't there be a place for Will Davenport? Not at a desk. And not in some exercise of noble humility like emptying bedpans at an old people's home. (He could have done that as a C.O. during Vietnam.) But something that allows him to buckle his swash as well as serve his nation. Applications for the Woodstock Brigade might not be overwhelming. Even Will, during our last conversation, says, "Gosh, what if I got my wish? Well," pause, "I guess I would still go."

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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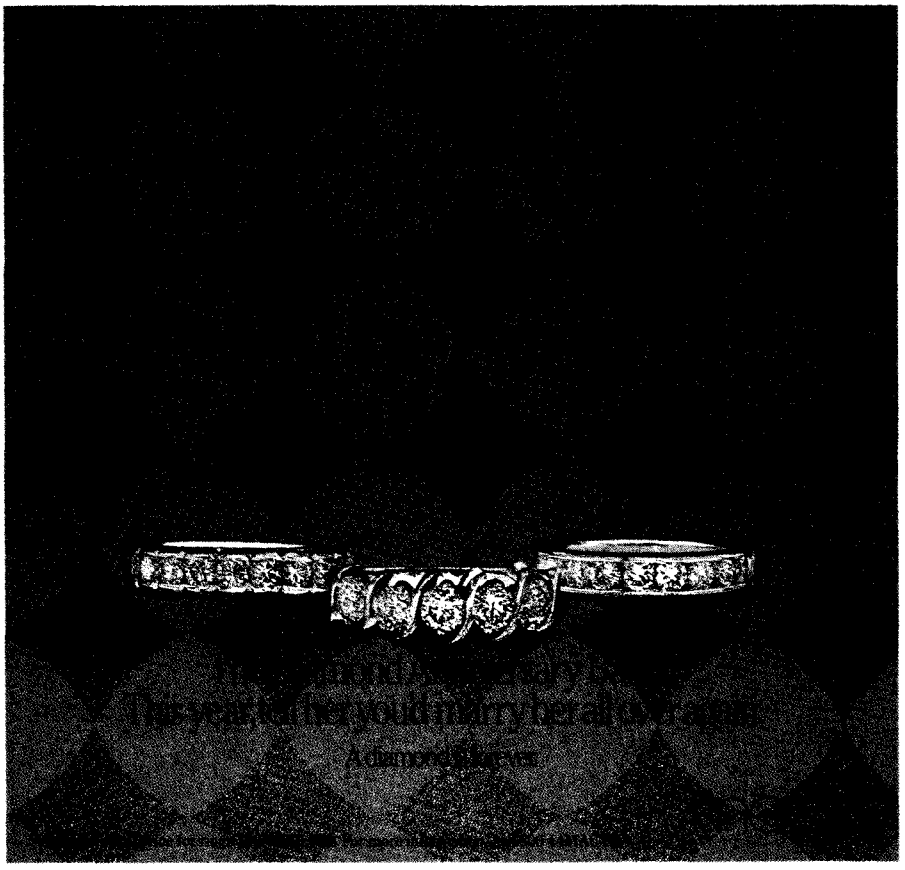

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CORRESPONDENCE

Granting credit

To the editors:

As a former "philanthropoid," I was amused by Robert Wright's commentary on the foibles of the foundation world ("The Foundation Game," November 5). On one point, however, he almost begs for some program officer pedantry. Regarding Saddam Hussein and Soviet economic transformation, "arguably the two most pressing problems facing the world at this moment," he writes, "it is safe to say that virtually none of the more than $50 billion spent by foundations between 1979 and 1989 went to illuminate them."

As Dustin Hoffman said in *Marathon Man*, it's not safe. On both scores, in fact, many scholar/analysts have published or otherwise participated in research projects supported by foundations in the past decade. On Iraq, a partial list includes the published work of Seth Carus for the Washington Institute on Near East Policy; Daniel Pipes of the Foreign Policy Research Institute; and Jed Snyder of the Washington Strategy Seminar. Grants for Soviet economic studies have mushroomed over the past five years. See, for example, the work of Charles Wolf at the Rand Corporation; Henry Rowen of Stanford; Ed Hewitt of Brookings; Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute; Padma Desai of Columbia's Harriman Institute; and Harvard's Marshall Goldman, among others.

Before Wright submits his grant proposal, I would add an eleventh "tip" to his list: Do your homework.

WILLIAM C. BODIE
New York, New York

Robert Wright replies:

For each example cited by Bodie, I could list hundreds of foundation-sponsored studies on nuclear strategy and bilateral arms control, two formerly hot topics of rapidly diminishing moment. A handful of prescient expenditures by the foundations is better than nothing, of course, so maybe I should have called it "a welcome drop in the bucket" of the overall spending, rather than "virtually none." Still, you get the point.

War fare

To the editors:

I agree with everything Robert Kuttner says about the sad state of the economy ("The Abyss," October 29)—except for his use of the Reaganesque term "record peacetime expansion." What we've experienced is a near-record wartime expansion, even though the death toll may have been only in the hundreds rather than the thousands. Defense purchases of goods and services, in real (inflation-adjusted) terms, jumped 55 percent during the seven-year-long expansion of 1980-87, compared with only a 32 percent rise during the Vietnam expansion of 1960-67. Most of the increase was concentrated in purchases of hardware, ranging from expensive weapons systems that don't work to expensive coffee makers that presumably do.

WILLIAM M. BURKE
San Francisco, California

Hot air

To the editors:

A propos Martin Peretz's November 5 Cambridge Diarist ("Word Games") and its comments on the misuse of the word "community": after an attempted airline hijacking during the early 1970s, a government official was quoted in *The Los Angeles Times* as talking about the "skyjacking community." I haven't come across anything quite as loony recently, so maybe things are actually getting better.

DALE E. ELLIOTT
Lovington, Illinois

Pride and prejudice

To the editors:

In "Shame" (October 8), Paul Berman reveals an unconscious Islamaphobia by selecting the political rhetoric of the rulers of Iran, and their paid clients in England and elsewhere, as the voice of all Muslims. The majority of Muslim (and other Arab) intellectuals are as tolerant and humane as anyone else, though they have found disturbing the considerable eruption of anti-Muslim prejudice that the Rushdie affair has encouraged and permitted among a good many British artists and intellectuals who have otherwise not been vociferous in civil liberties issues. It is in that context that some concerned politicians have perhaps confusedly taken the Muslim part.

Berman rightly emphasizes the profound racism of British society but simplifies too readily the motives of, for instance, Bradford's Labour candidates. They have reacted not to Rushdie's book but to the racism of some of its defendants. In another context Rushdie himself is likely to have taken a similar stand.

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NOVEMBER 26, 1990

THE VISIBLE HAND

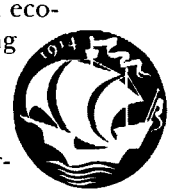
The Bush administration has done its best to banish the phrase "industrial policy" from the public mind. Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher, who in 1989 was making noises about nurturing research in high-definition television, finally got so many dirty looks from budget director Richard Darman that he changed the subject. Craig Fields, who was head of the Defense Department's Advanced Research Project Agency, received a less subtle cue. When he suggested that DARPA purposefully do what it has long done incidentally—subsidize new technologies that hold economic promise (including HDTV)—he lost his job.

You might think President Bush has taken a principled stand against the whole premise of industrial policy—the idea that private capital markets can't be trusted to guide investment wisely, so the government should step in and steer resources toward tomorrow's boom industries. Guess again. In the abortive first round of budget negotiations in late September Mr. Bush surrendered his cherished capital gains tax cut—itself a distortion of free capital flow—only in exchange for a tax break for investment in small businesses. The official rationale was that small businesses are the engines of innovation, and that for some unarticulated reason their vast potential will escape the notice of investors in the absence of government guidance. In the end this provision fell by the wayside.

It is perhaps overly generous to take this rationale seriously, since the tax break's more certain effect would be to turn small businesses into the engines of a revved up tax-shelter industry. But the official logic is noteworthy anyway, as an example of an increasingly common ambivalence about industrial policy. On the one hand, there is the growing sense that the government should do *something* to keep Japan and Germany, and indeed all of post-1992 Europe, from leaving us in the dust. On the other hand, there is the common-sense suspicion that industrial policy in the strictest sense—identifying and cultivating specific sunrise industries—isn't something the government is naturally good at. Why, after all, should some salaried bureaucrat, working for a government infested with pork-barrel tendencies, do a better job of picking tomorrow's winners than investors whose money is on the line?

This ambivalence has spawned a number of proposals aimed at nourishing not particular industries, but the industrial base as a whole, or at least very large segments of it. They include tax breaks for a broad range of investments (as in the Bush plan) or for savings accounts (which feed investment), as well as other means of raising the savings rate, such as steep taxes on consumption. You might call these relatively diffuse forms of support for American industry "competitiveness policy."

We share the twin intuitions behind competitiveness policy: yes, the government can help; no, not by "picking winners." Yet we find many specific incarnations of competitiveness policy disappointing. Our own version is not anything radically new, or especially sexy, or miraculously endowed with restorative powers. It's just a policy that would make things better than they are. The best way to build a definition of it is to start at the bottom and ask why *any* sort of government intervention is in order. After all, according to classical economic theory, individual companies, in pursuing their self-interest, will maximize the nation's economic well-being; wherever our "comparative advantages" in international trade lie—in textiles, in software, in pop music—the free market will find and foster them.



What, if anything, is wrong with this logic? There are various answers, some good, some not so good. We will take them in reverse order.

Answer No. 1: Comparative advantages are made, not born. Governments can help create them, just as Japan's famed Ministry of International Trade and Industry helped identify and fill Japan's niche in the auto industry.

Well, yes, MITI may deserve some credit. But Japan has other things going for it, things harder to emulate by mandate, such as a pervasive social emphasis on competence and hard work. In fact, much the same could be said of all the nations whose industrial policies are commonly held up as models. Germany, for exam-

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ple, has a work ethic that for a while there looked like it might even make communism work. Attributing the economic miracles of Japan and Germany and South Korea mainly to industrial policy is only a little sillier than saying that the Beatles made a more enduring mark on culture than Herman's Hermits because they had better management.

Besides, not all of Japan's industrial bets are winners. Remember the "Fifth Generation" computer project, which American computer scientists (in trying to scare up subsidies for themselves) warned would dominate world markets? It was a ten-year project, launched nine-and-a-half years ago, and we're still waiting for those fluent translation machines, and those household robots far superior to The Jetsons' Rosey. In the meantime, we would like to hear in greater detail why comparative advantages shouldn't be expected to arise naturally. If investment in a new product or service will be profitable in the long run, why shouldn't an efficient capital market put up the cash?

Answer No. 2: America has short time horizons. Whereas Japanese companies (aided by the omniscient MITI) peer far into the future, spotting and meeting distant consumer demands, Americans live for the present. This problem is often described as a pervasive cultural one, crystallized in the form of high interest rates. America's shortsighted families spend their money (and borrow more) instead of putting it in savings accounts, where it would fill the capital pool and lower interest rates. The federal government, meanwhile, borrows massively, draining the capital pool. Bad combination.

The implication (we are told) is obvious: the government should either (*a*) step in and selectively subsidize promising investments (industrial policy); or (*b*) extend time horizons across the board by lowering the cost of capital (competitiveness policy), perhaps with tax breaks for saving and/or investment. The ill-fated budget package that Mr. Bush and Democratic leaders originally settled on is closer to Plan B: shrink the budget deficit, thus raising the pool of available capital, while using tax incentives to make capital cheaper still for a broad class of industries (those populated by small companies).

The tension between the two prongs of this strategy—trying to cut the deficit while handing out tax breaks—is so obvious that we get only mild pleasure from pointing it out. Anyway, there is a larger problem with schemes to cut capital costs: the supply of and demand for money within a nation aren't what determine that nation's interest rates. The key is world supply and demand. In a virtually global economy, with capital flowing readily across borders, all nations in principle should face roughly the same costs of borrowing. And the only clearly demonstrated departure from that principle is that a nation whose currency is expected to drop in value will have to pay higher interest rates, since its dollars (for example) are expected to be worth less by the time the foreign lender gets them back.

This isn't an argument for big budget deficits. An ever-expanding deficit may in a roundabout way—by undermining faith in your currency—raise interest rates at home. And anyway, there are other reasons why saving, whether in the public or the private sector, is a good thing. The main one is that the saver, and therefore the country, gets richer, regardless of whether the money is invested at home or abroad. But don't expect a pro-savings policy to cheapen automatically the cost of capital for "American" companies relative to "foreign" companies. (The quotation marks are a reminder of how blurry that distinction is getting anyway, as companies sprawl across the globe.) And *please*, if we are going to encourage saving while trying to cut the budget deficit, let's be rational. Rather than tax savings less heavily, thus retarding progress against the deficit, let's tax consumption more heavily. Just one caveat: a consumption tax typically hurts low-income families hardest. Crafting one that is progressive, as David Bradford of Princeton University has shown, is trickier than many of its backers would have you believe, but, as he has also shown, it is doable.

We don't deny that American companies have short time horizons. But there is no reason to think this defect can be fixed by fiddling with macroeconomic dials, and every reason to think it is complexly embedded in modern American mores: in a high turnover rate that has managers continually hopping from one company to the next, leaving a trail of budding fiascoes in their wake; in the high tolerance for sloth and incompetence that seems to infect generations born to affluence; and so on. Any case for industrial or competitiveness policy will have to find a better rationale. What is it?

Answer No. 3: The problem isn't one of "time horizons," but of "externalities." Some investments make sense for the nation but not for any one company; their fruits are "non-appropriable." Consider again the high turnover rate in modern America. Why should employers invest in training such mobile workers? That amounts to subsidizing their next employer. This bind is said to be especially sticky because intellectual capital is such a big part of products and services in a high-tech economy. Training grows in importance, while the incentive to pay for it shrinks; so the government must foot the bill.

This argument holds some truth, but let's not overstate it. There is a third party that can appropriate the fruits of training and education: the worker. Why isn't it in his or her interest to pay for the necessary education, since his or her salary will grow as a result? Granted, if it's narrow training, applicable only at Acme Modems, he or she might be leery of investing in it. But if that's the case, Acme doesn't have to worry so much about the worker running off with it. The smaller Acme's incentive to pay for the training, the greater the worker's incentive.

Now, it's safe to say there's some incentive left over that slips between the cracks and falls on the government. Besides, even workers with good reason to educate themselves will often lack the funds, since they're

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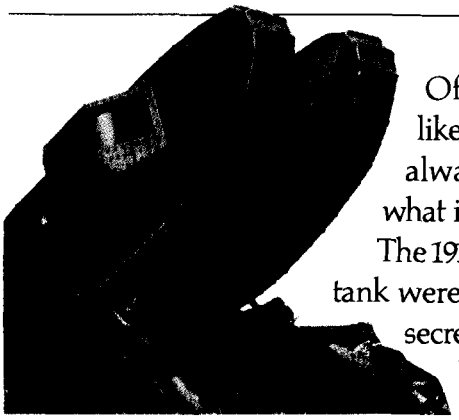
UNLIKE SOME THINGS TODAY, IT'S BUILT LIKE A TANK.



According to excited WWI reports, "Big Boy," one of the first American tanks, could knock down "huge trees."

Of course, "built like a tank" didn't always mean what it means today. The 1916 origins of the tank were shrouded in secrecy on purpose. Even the word "tank" was mysterious.

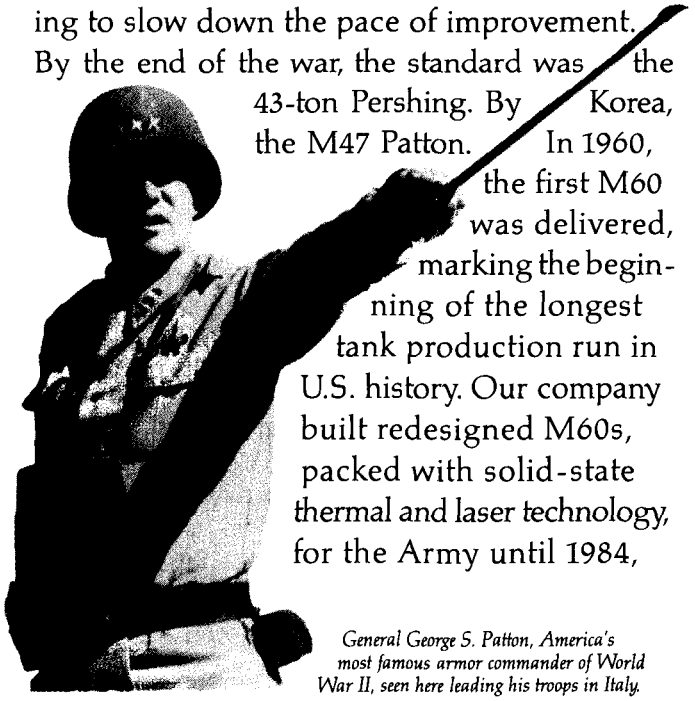
The name came from the British during World War I. While they were developing the early machines, to keep their real purpose hidden, British officers referred to them as water tanks. The name stuck.

So did the first tanks. In mud. On slopes. In ditches.

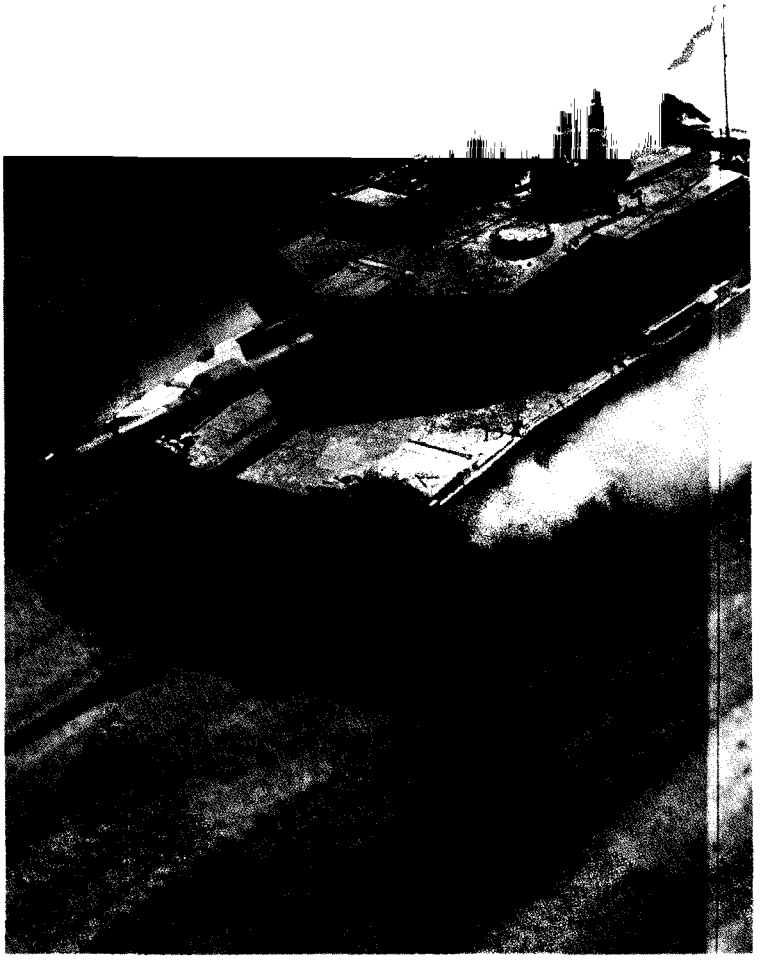
But by World War II, all the warring nations were building tanks.

American wartime industrial effort produced them in astonishing numbers: 6,653 Sherman tanks at the Detroit Arsenal in 1944 alone.

Yet the furious pace of production did nothing to slow down the pace of improvement. By the end of the war, the standard was the 43-ton Pershing. By Korea, the M47 Patton. In 1960, the first M60 was delivered, marking the beginning of the longest tank production run in U.S. history. Our company built redesigned M60s, packed with solid-state thermal and laser technology, for the Army until 1984,



General George S. Patton, America's most famous armor commander of World War II, seen here leading his troops in Italy.



and for American allies until 1987.

But in the early 1970s, work had begun on a brand new tank of such expanded capabilities, experts called it not an improvement, but a reinvention.

It was the M1 Abrams.

In day or night, in snow or desert sand, M1 technology exceeds the abilities of competitive tanks. Both in effectiveness and reliability.

The 65-ton Abrams can accelerate from a standing start faster than many small cars. For it, a nine-foot trench is no obstacle. Nor is a 60% grade.

Soon the third generation Abrams, the M1A2, will begin tracking off the world's most highly roboticized tank production line.

Yet, even the M1A2 will not be the last word. Technological evolution is a constant force at General Dynamics, and our engineers are working to give American tank crews ever faster, stronger, better equipment.

One thing will be the same.

We will build them to be the best.

GENERAL DYNAMICS

A Strong Company For A Strong Country

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not worth much until after the education. That alone is a sound reason for the government to be much more generous with educational and vocational aid. But the object of the game is largely to help the worker with a cash-flow problem, so the money should come mainly as low-interest or no-interest loans, not grants. This has the added advantage of encouraging students to seek education with a commercial payoff. We place more faith in their ability to thus sniff out sunrise industries than in the government's ability to do it for them by subsidizing training only selectively. (Of course, not all educational subsidies have economic ends; education has many "civic" externalities. But educational aid that is part of a competitiveness policy should be tailored to its end.)

Speaking of educational externalities: there is of course no better competitiveness policy than a good K-through-12 school system, and the current absence of one is abundantly manifest. It is not unusual to walk into a McDonald's and place an order with a teenager whose communication skills seem strained by the slightest deviation from the rote script memorized in McTraining. So long as that is the case, such jobs will lead no higher—not to a McDonald's managership, much less to a non-dead-end job in the still sizable non-fast-food sector of the economy. It is largely up to the public schools—for which "the education president," at last check, had done virtually nothing—to turn kids who barely qualify for minimum wage jobs into young adults who can aspire to something better. If calling public education a competitiveness policy (which it is) will get the attention of Mr. Bush and Congress, then let's call it that.

One other form of investment is often said to bear non-appropriable fruit: basic research—deep scientific inquiry with no obvious application. Firms are naturally reluctant to pay millions gaining knowledge that, after it reaches scientific journals, can be exploited by a company across town. So the government should support basic research. And, of course, the government does. The American pharmaceutical industry, for example, owes much to basic research funded by the National Institutes of Health.

This logic threatens to devour itself. Research that can help a cross-town rival can help a cross-ocean rival, too, so why should Uncle Sam support it? It's a good question. The best answer is that even in the information age, knowledge isn't wholly separable from the minds that create it. Witness the Route 128s and Silicon Valleys that spring up around subsidized research centers such as MIT and Stanford. To be sure, it remains unclear exactly how much of the action these neighborhoods really hang on to: What fraction of the commercial benefits of basic research stay within our borders, given an increasingly global scientific community and a growing number of foreign graduate students? If someone can show that this fraction has indeed reached distressingly small proportions, or will soon, then subsidies for basic research will be due for rethinking. But until then, gearing up federal support for basic research via the National Science Foundation and NIH will be a good bet.

Some have tried to extend the externalities argument from basic research to applied research. But the logic grows strained. Applied research is, well, applied—narrowly directed toward a particular product, and yielding insights that are proprietary until patent time, at which point the patentor has a large head start on further applications. Besides, subsidies of applied research resurrect that original, stubborn question of why pointy-headed bureaucrats should have special insight into the world of tomorrow. Subsidizing basic research, in contrast, means picking winners in only the largest sense—guessing, for example, that molecular biology and computer science and subatomic physics will play a large economic role for a long time (like forever). These are assuredly good guesses.

If American companies are honestly worried about the spillover of benefits from their applied research—or if they simply find some line of research too expensive to undertake alone—there's nothing wrong with relaxing anti-trust laws and letting them pool their research resources. As competition from abroad grows, the collusion of American companies ceases to be anti-competitive. But so far these experiments have tended not to work. Remember U.S. Memories, the big IBM-led memory chip consortium? If you blinked, you missed it. Consortia may be yet another example of a Japanese solution not easily grafted onto American problems.

Note the distinction between U.S. Memories, a spontaneous creation of the free market, and Sematech, the Texas-based, government-backed microchip research consortium. The distinction isn't that one worked and one didn't; though Sematech is still intact, it shows no convincing signs of ultimate success. The distinction is that Sematech, thanks to assured government funding, can limp along wastefully long after its prospects begin to dim. Both the market and the government make mistakes, but the market admits them.

The word "wastefully" in the above paragraph deserves emphasis. Economists who profess agnosticism on industrial policy often say we might as well spend a few billion dollars on it, since—who knows?—it might work. And what's a few billion dollars, anyway? Well, it's money that could be put to better use. Granted, these foregone opportunities are seldom conspicuous. If Sematech's $100 million annual subsidy were left in the capital market, you could never identify all the little but good things that wouldn't have happened without it. But they're there. And sometimes they're there in spades. If it takes $1.2 billion to develop microwidgets, and the investment isn't inherently worth it, but a government subsidy of $200 million tips the scale and convinces some company to put up the other $1 billion, that's $1.2 billion of total waste. This is why industrial policy in the narrow sense is not only a bad idea, but an insidious one.

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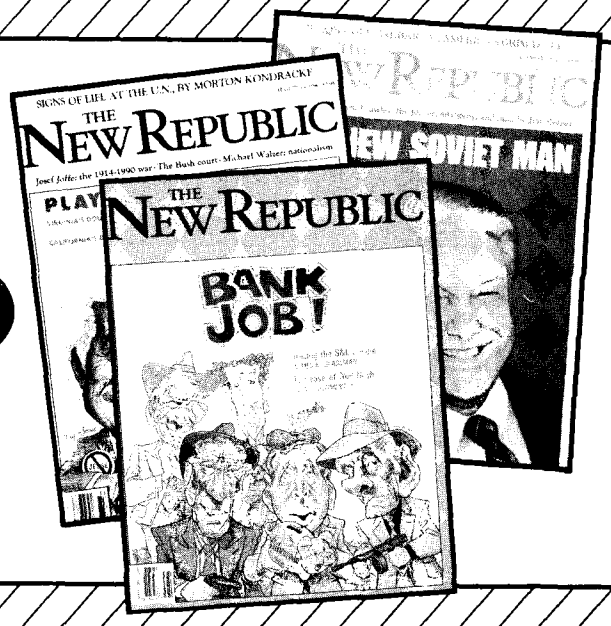

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A competitiveness policy needn't be either. So long as it isn't grounded in the illusion that we can magically lengthen America's time horizons, and focuses instead on the real externalities that afflict the free market, it deserves a large investment.

There's a danger in our concluding that the best economic policy is to do more of what we already do: better educate our children, make sure no capable candidate is denied college or postgraduate education or vocational training because of a temporary lack of funds; sharply increase government support of basic scientific research. The danger is that this sounds ominously like "more of the same." And it has become a hallmark of the Bush administration to blur that line—to promise renewed commitments to blah, blah, blah (like education) and then convene some conference that culminates with the declaration that progress has been made. So let us underscore the point: we're talking about spending a lot more money on the public schools, a lot more money on basic research, and a lot more money on loans for education and training, and paying for it honestly, perhaps through progressive consumption taxes that, as a bonus, may boost the nation's savings. Call it competitiveness policy. Or even call it industrial policy. But do it.

NOTEBOOK

CONSISTENCY UNREWARDED: Despite a campaign slogan that explained everything, Lyndon LaRouche failed to win the Virginia congressional seat for which he campaigned from his cell, where he is serving fifteen years for mail fraud and tax evasion. Mr. LaRouche began his political career in the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party, before founding the SDS Labor Committee in the late 1960s with a group of Maoists. The LaRouche grouplet next turned to deprogramming its own members, allegedly brainwashed by the CIA/KGB. In the 1970s and 1980s, Mr. LaRouche moved rapidly to the far right, campaigning noisily in airports for capitalism, nuclear power, and draconian measures against people with AIDS. The 1990 campaign slogan? "Lyndon LaRouche has been right all along."

DISCOLORED PROBOSCIS WATCH: Reporter Thomas Friedman's hard-hitting coverage of the State Department continued last Saturday with a front-page article in *The New York Times*. Just when there were gripes that Secretary of State James Baker was distancing himself from White House Gulf policy, Friedman helpfully intervened. He explained that Baker was rather "motivated by an acute sense of the risks, international and domestic, that could flow from a major military conflict." So Baker disagreed with Bush? No, Friedman elaborated, the secretary was merely a "pragmatist, who assesses any particular foreign policy issue based on a complex equation of what he feels is in the national interest, what seems possible, what will serve in Mr. Bush's interests . . . and finally how it will affect James Baker." If there was any interruption in Baker's nearly selfless pursuit of the common good, it was merely to temper the president's war fever "with perhaps a slightly stronger measure of caution, and early on, even skepticism." But distancing? Never.

DEPT. OF SELF-PARODY:

Notes and Comment

A FRIEND wintering on the Cape writes:
Are we going to bomb Baghdad?

—*The New Yorker*, November 5

BOOK MAN: We're delighted to welcome Peter Bejger as editor of New Republic Books. Mr. Bejger was most recently an editor at Henry Holt. Before that he worked in the paperback division of Harper & Row. New Republic Books is published by Basic Books, a division of Harper Collins. •

The electorate's midterm breather.

ENTR'ACTE

By Sidney Blumenthal

George Bush has explained that the reason he unleashed the negative onslaught that won him the presidency was a provocation beyond human endurance. It came from "that woman," the one with the towering white hairdo, the evil twin of the Silver Fox, whose keynote address at the Democratic convention taunted him for being born with a "silver foot" in his mouth. Two years later Ann Richards's darts at the Connecticut-patrician-turned-transplanted-Texan still stung. Bush's motive, therefore, in coming to his home state (one of several) to campaign for Clayton Williams was high revenge.

Williams was the representative man that Bush had spent decades trying to ingratiate himself with: an authentic, independent oilman-cowboy—from Midland, no less, where Bush had settled to make his own millions. And Williams was exactly the sort of candidate who was supposed to triumph in the year of the anti-incumbent, even if his loose talk about the joy of rape

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and why he didn't pay taxes made him, perhaps, a little too authentic. Even so, the president rolled into Texas on his behalf like Sam Houston at San Jacinto. For the last three days before Election Day, he shot off all his muskets with a loud report—and then was routed, humiliated by a modern Annie Oakley in his effort to be kingmaker of the cowboys.

Bush's setback in the midterm election runs deeper than his frustration to realize his old Texan pretensions. The loss is greater than suggested by the modest numbers of congressional offices and governors' mansions that have slipped from Republicans' hands. Nor is it simply that the president has no coattails; neither did the midterm Ronald Reagan. It is not even that Bush was a genuine liability in some places—in Hawaii, for example, where Republican Senate candidate Patricia Saiki was ahead when the president arrived to bestow his endorsement and fatally behind hours later when he departed. In his dashing to and fro, George Bush demonstrated his one extraordinary quality, his preternatural energy. But he also revealed the essential characteristic of his presidency: its aimlessness.

The Republicans do not know how to organize themselves around a party led by George Bush. They do not know what themes they are supposed to sound, what programs to support, the point of it all. One by one, the fires of the Reagan era have dwindled to barely glowing coals. Bush had no fuel to add. All he could do was pump the bellows of war rhetoric, but he was so overblown, calling Saddam Hussein worse than Hitler, and so disconnected from any tangible goal, that the Persian Gulf crisis had no discernible electoral valence. The Republicans were left with merely a campaign against "incumbency." Their remaining idea was just partisanship.

Even some of the good news in the midterm for Bush was not really good. The one great Republican triumph, the victory of Senator Jesse Helms, used raw racial appeals, damaging Bush's two-year-long effort to muster black support. When Helms was first elected to the Senate (in 1972, not in 1978, as I mistakenly wrote in "Republican of Fear," TNR, November 12), he was part of a rising conservative tide. But three New Right senators retired this year, and, in spite of Helms's ability to hang on, he is more isolated than ever, more a nuisance to Bush's foreign policy than to the Democrats.

The victory of William Weld in the Massachusetts gubernatorial race was a statistical plus but a political minus for the Republicans. Weld's win destroyed the chance of sending a devastatingly disruptive agent provocateur into the councils of the Democratic Party, even perhaps as a presidential candidate. John Silber had gained his prominence by voicing the secret beliefs of voters who themselves were too fearful or civil to voice them. But when Silber declared that women would rather work than take care of their children, he was voicing only his own secret thoughts. He had finally lashed himself with his tongue one time too many. Thus he lost more than the corner office in the Statehouse. The reams of newspaper articles that were about to be written, the hundreds of hours of television time, the covers of the newsweeklies all evaporated in an instant. Silber was sentenced to return to his Prussian estate on the Charles, an embittered junker. The Democratic Party, through no fault of its own, was rescued from being the forum for the demons that afflict him.

More governorships changed hands than all the federal shifts combined. As in Massachusetts, the underlying issue was economic anxiety. Governors are executives, and largely held responsible for performance. In California, where the economy has not experienced the wobbliness it has elsewhere, the Democrat, Dianne Feinstein, fell just short. Her campaign was mostly tactical; only in the closing days, when she began to close, did she loft the banner of economic fairness, the theme the Democrats had carried from the budget battle. Yet this was not enough in California, where the middle class may feel its dream slipping away but not in a way that is described in highly schematic rhetoric. Economic populism can carry a Democrat far, but only so far—the lesson not only of California but also of the bottom of the ticket in Texas, where the quintessential economic populist, Jim Hightower, lost the agricultural commissionership that had seemed his for life.

In the meantime, the elaborate "Big Green" environmental initiative failed there, a thud also heard in New York, where an initiative to provide great sums for the Adirondacks was rejected. The environmentalists were stymied by voters willing to support almost any broad environmental commitment in a poll but unwilling to back specific policies at the polls. In this, the voters have shown a desire not to go back but also not to go forward—the dominant mood of the Bush era.

The entrails of midterm elections are always read for augurs of the next presidential campaign. The 1990 returns contain messages that two prospective Democratic candidates will have to decipher. Senator Bill Bradley, whose height was considered a fair measure of how far above his opponent he would finish, was nearly upset. In his state, New Jersey, the governor, James Florio, has inaugurated a policy of redistributing monies from affluent to poorer school districts, and of raising new taxes, without figuring how to manage the politics. Florio's program is wildly unpopular. Bradley, whose instinct is to redouble his caution, steadfastly refused to take a stand. With his ads unreeling constantly, he was at once ubiquitous and invisible. His opponent seized on the tax issue and came very, very close. Will Bradley redouble his caution again after his frightening brush with political oblivion, or will the shock to his system rearrange his political instincts?

Mario Cuomo faced two nobodies in New York, yet finished less well than expected, winning by 53 percent. His real opponent was a disembodied discontent. Cuomo's tenure is now extended to three terms. He has reached a station he never imagined when he began his

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career, No. 1 in his red-brick law class but rejected by fifty Wall Street law firms. If he wants a fate grander than the squalor in which his state will almost certainly wallow for the next four years, he will soon have to ponder the inevitable question hovering in the noosphere above Albany. Teasing is a choice with a shortening life span.

Midterm elections are almost always contingent on local politics, peculiarities such as the implosion of the Minnesota Independent Republican Party, triggered by revelations of skinny-dipping with teenagers by its gubernatorial candidate, the result of which was the only loss of a Senate incumbent, Rudy Boschwitz. And yet midterms are the intermissions that mark a dividing line in presidencies, setting off the early honeymoon from the difficult complications. By subtracting from the president's strength, the dilemmas are made harder.

Bush, like the recently defeated governors (including his former nemesis Michael Dukakis), stands on the ground of a shaky economy. He is, or is not, contemplating war in the Gulf. His erratic, uncertain performance as the curtain has fallen on act one has sent the audience into the foyer with a terrible thirst. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

IDENTITY CRISIS

By Fred Barnes

Jack Kemp, Jim Baker, and John Sununu have invented a new George Bush—actually, three new George Bushes. Kemp, the secretary of housing and urban development, says Bush is now a ferocious supply-sider. Bush is so passionately committed to "a growth-oriented tax incentive program" in 1991, Kemp says, that he spent the final days of the election campaign talking it up. Not quite, Jack. Bush campaigned furiously, but he never mentioned a program of fresh tax cuts. And that includes the cut in the capital gains rate that Kemp relishes.

Baker's version also has Bush playing against type. Bush isn't the supercautious president we've come to know. He's impetuous, a hothead who's too willing to go to war with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein over Kuwait. Fortunately there's a cool-headed secretary of state, Baker, to pull Bush back from the brink time after time. (Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times*, who covers Baker, spelled out this version.) The Bush invented by Sununu, the White House chief of staff, is more believable, but not much. Bush is a master political strategist who brought Republicans to exactly where they wanted to be on election day. Where's that? To the point where they'd lose fewer than twenty-seven House seats, six senators, and six governorships. Some test. Republicans have done better than that in every midterm election since 1974. This time, they lost eight House seats, a senator, and one governorship. But Republicans managed this despite the president, not because of him.

All the weird talk about Bush is evidence of an identity crisis at the top of the administration. After nearly twenty-two months, the Bush presidency lacks definition, shape, or overriding purpose. Bush is still a blank slate every adviser wants to write on. In late October Sununu bought the idea, devised by White House aide James Pinkerton, that Bush should emulate President Harry Truman and excoriate the opposition. So for two days—October 29 and 30—Bush was feisty and wildly partisan. This wasn't easy. On the one hand, he felt obliged to defend the budget agreement he'd just reached with Democrats. On the other, he insisted Democrats should be driven in shame from Capitol Hill.

"Harry Truman reminded us that only a president represents all the people, can stand for the national interest and stand against the special interests," Bush said at the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City. In this spirit, he'd "worked for a bipartisan solution to this horrible budget mess." How'd Democrats reward his goodwill? "With business as usual," Bush declared scornfully. "America has had enough of business as usual and we don't have to take it anymore. . . . More Republican congressmen means more men and women fighting against raising taxes and against the big spenders. . . . More Republicans means a better deal for America. And it doesn't get any straighter than that."

Maybe not, but the Truman tack didn't fly. Crowds reacted tepidly. Bush's poll numbers fell. And a backlash erupted at the White House. Vice President Dan Quayle, budget director Richard Darman, and Bush's two top political advisers, pollster Robert Teeter and media consultant Roger Ailes, thought Bush's appearances were undignified and counterproductive. The matter came to a head in a heated session in the Oval Office on October 31. Teeter and Ailes urged Bush to take a less shrill, more presidential approach. Fulminating like Truman, Ailes said later, "is not in character. It isn't George Bush." Sununu, who still liked the Truman strategy, objected. But Bush decided to play to his strength, foreign policy. (The pro-Truman forces didn't give up. The day before the election, Pinkerton brought Clark Clifford, the former Truman adviser, to the White House mess for lunch.)

The next day Bush had a new message. He said he'd "had it" with Saddam Hussein. He asked audiences at Republican rallies to "shift gears" and listen to something nonpartisan. Then Bush talked tough. He said he'd accept "no compromise at all" with Iraq. He denounced the "brutality against innocent civilians" by Saddam Hussein. "The kind of rhetoric he's used is childish," said one senior official. "What kind of thing is

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'I've had it' for a president to say? Are we supposed to go to war because the president's 'had it' with Saddam Hussein?"

The shift in style and focus helped, in spite of Bush's crude handling of the Iraq issue. Bush's approval rating jumped from 51 percent to 58 percent in the ABC/*Washington Post* poll. He finished the campaign on a high, though a short-lived one. Zinging Hussein in speeches is nice, but it doesn't give Bush a strong political identity. After all, almost every American politician zings Hussein.

Postelection, Bush faces three big domestic political problems. One is the divided Republican Party. For the first time in more than two decades, Republicans are split, Democrats reasonably united. The second is the recession that we're in or about to be. Bush had better do something about that. The third is the image of weakness that Bush has created, mostly by flip-flopping on taxes. If he doesn't solve these problems, or at least alleviate them, he's bound to have trouble winning re-election in 1992.

I think there's an answer to all three problems: an agenda. Most presidents have an agenda that defines them by the time they reach the midpoint of their first term, but not Bush. He'll never be an ideological president like Reagan; nobody expects that. But he needs an agenda to give his presidency a veneer of substance and a purpose. However, there's not a mad rush at the White House to cobble together an agenda—far from it. Bush and his aides are more inclined to dither and spend their time settling scores with dissident Republicans, such as House GOP whip Newt Gingrich, who bucked Bush on the budget. That's a political mistake. Bush's embrace of a budget package with tax increases is the source of the split in the Republican Party. The more Bush talks about the agreement, the more he drives a wedge between Republicans. Bush, Sununu, and Darman believe Gingrich and his pals are the cause of the split. They're wrong. Bush is. Kemp, for one, argued bitterly with Sununu after the election that the White House should make peace overtures to the dissidents. Sununu rebuffed him.

Gingrich, who was re-elected by a whisker, and his followers want to rejoin the fold, if only Bush gives them a reason. Bush can do it with an agenda that includes cutting the capital gains tax as an anti-recession measure. By itself, this measure is politically unpalatable. Coupled with a cut in the Social Security payroll tax, it's not. Darman is opposed to slashing the payroll tax, but it's good politics and good (progressive) tax policy. Under the budget agreement, Bush is required to come up with revenues to cover what's lost in tax cuts. Democrats (and lots of Republicans, too) are sure to squawk, but there are plenty of discretionary spending programs with narrow special interest constituencies that ought to be eliminated: the Rural Electrification Administration, the Export-Import Bank, the Economic Development Administration, the Small Business Administration. There are still dozens of military bases to close. I could go on. Reagan tried to kill these programs and failed. Bush hasn't tried. Given the public disgust with Washington, there may be a new opportunity for spending cuts in 1991.

Don't laugh, but there's low-level talk at the White House of a "reform agenda." Bush actually touched on Republican-style reform in his Trumanesque speeches, but he didn't elaborate beyond advocating term limits and a line-item veto. Bush dubbed Congress "America's biggest and most entrenched special interest." Hard to argue with that. "The Democratic Congress would rather raise taxes than raise the issue of reform," he claimed. Well, maybe. In any case, Bush is on to something. But he's got to enlarge it into a full agenda. As incongruous as this sounds, Bush could make the "establishment" his target, attacking the political establishment with term limits and campaign finance reform, the legal establishment with tort reform, the education establishment with incentives for "choice" in schools, and so on.

Bush doesn't have to stay up nights reading Heritage Foundation position papers to find an agenda. All he has to do is collect various proposals he's endorsed in the past, package them, and give the package an appealing label like "reform." OK, that's not bold leadership. But it's a step in the right direction. The next step is for Bush to fight for his agenda. He'll have to scuttle his preference for compromise over confrontation. Bush doesn't need to win, only fight. In his memo urging the Truman strategy, Pinkerton touted Truman's veto of Taft-Hartley in 1948. Truman knew he'd be overridden, but he vetoed the bill anyway. He gained enormously from the episode. He defined himself as a fighter with strong convictions. Bush can't be Truman. But if he doesn't identify himself with something, he'll be written off as an empty suit. •

BAGHDAD POSTCARD

STIFF UPPER LIP

By John Nicolson

The ghost of Farzad Bazoft lurks everywhere for British journalists working in Baghdad. It's not that he's often mentioned. In fact, the only time his name is ever raised is when the government spooks who stick to us like lint are in a playful mood. "My friend, you be careful, or you'll end up like Bazoft." Journalists don't discuss him.

But you remember him. You remember that it was in Iraq, in a period of considerably less tension, that a British journalist was executed for carrying out his le-

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gitimate duties. Of course, anyone who's spent time in the country wonders how Bazoft possibly believed that he could escape scrutiny long enough to carry out his assignment: visiting an Iraqi military site.

Iraq is a high-tech police state, what Romania might have been if Ceausescu's Securitate had had access to vast oil wealth. In the splendor of my hotel a giant television, thick-set with wood and plastic, seemed incongruous. Closer examination showed that buried within it was a Hitachi portable, leaving plenty of room for other electronics. Six heavy wires protruded from its back into the wall. I was told that a closed-circuit camera was installed behind the sound grill. (Cameras are everywhere in Baghdad: even the hotel rest rooms have infrared lights to facilitate filming.) At three in the morning my first night, I started awake, my room flooded with ghostly blue light and loud music. An old trick, I was warned by a colleague, just to keep hostile journalists tired and rattled.

I take my hat off to reporters who aim to be in Baghdad for the duration. I was there for as long as former British Prime Minister Edward Heath—five days—helping to cover his trip for BBC News, and the memory of fear is still with me. Personal fear, of course, but also the fear felt by the hostages, some of them held in the most appalling circumstances. I interviewed one man, a diabetic, who as part of Saddam Hussein's human shield had been held prisoner in a small room in the wall of a giant dam. Fear, he said, gnawed at him, driving him to distraction: fear that his insulin would run out, that he'd die a lonely, lingering death (he had only five days' supply left when Heath rescued him), that the Americans would bomb the dam as part of a military action, and that he'd die anonymously, crushed by millions of gallons of water. I interviewed another man with lung cancer. His doctor had told him that he couldn't expect to live beyond Christmas, and he'd planned to return home to his wife just as the Iraqis invaded. Transferred against his will to a Baghdad hospital, he was examined by Iraqi doctors with a stethoscope and pronounced cured—healthy enough to be sent out to join other hostages.

The day I left Baghdad I was approached furtively by a young Arab woman. She broke down in tears as she told me of her two Kuwaiti friends, executed by Iraqi soldiers. They had been caught smuggling food to Westerners hiding in Kuwait City. Her English husband was still hiding from the authorities. She was terrified that if she were caught feeding him she too would lose her life. She had traveled from Kuwait hoping to meet Heath. Could I get a message to him?

Such fears accost even ordinary Iraqis. It's easy to be deceived by the million portraits of Hussein emblazoned across Iraq, or to assume, even fleetingly, that because your host wears a Taiwanese watch with Hussein's likeness on its face he supports his leader. Almost all Iraqis look past you in the street, either having surrendered or refusing to divulge the merest hint of independent thought. As for the few others, as one man put it, you get to the point where you'd rather die than remain cowed and silent forever. If you can get some of these people to talk, they'll tell of their shame at Iraq's keeping hostages, and ask nervously about the prospects of war. They'll tell you horror stories of the Cabinet minister beaten to death by Hussein himself, or of the dungeons built beneath the secluded villa at which Heath stayed.

Watching Heath in Baghdad was somehow the most surreal vision of all: a portly presence, immaculately suited, not a silver hair out of place, ushered from tense meeting to tense meeting by obsequious yet threatening officials. Heath seemed very English, very dignified, and rather brave. Only once did he lose his composure, when he was told that two young brothers whose release he had negotiated had been in a car accident on their way to the airport and freedom. One had died.

At his two Baghdad press conferences, Heath fielded with ease the unfamiliar questions of Iraqi journalists and the familiar ones of the British press. Why was the West allowing Iraqi babies to die through lack of milk? demanded an Iraqi press attaché, masquerading ridiculously as an American journalist. This was happening only if the regime was withholding milk to babies, Heath explained. Plenty was available. Had British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd really asked him to go to Iraq? asked a British hack. Was Mr. Hurd still foreign secretary? Heath replied. It was difficult when out of the country, he said, to keep up with Mrs. Thatcher's Cabinet reshuffles.

Heath had asked that 200 mostly old and sick people be released into his care. Belying his public sangfroid, he had argued passionately in private with the Iraqis that, at the very least, they had to surrender the gravely ill. The Iraqis had forced him to argue each case on an individual basis. Heath was ultimately allowed thirty-three hostages: fewer than he'd asked for, but more than he'd expected.

As we headed to the airport, the ghost of Bazoft returned. Had one of us done something to enrage the authorities? Would the Iraqis honor their word and allow all of us to leave? Last year a Swiss businessman was removed from a plane just before takeoff. He'd been reported for changing money on the black market and was eventually executed.

My fears were confirmed at customs. "Mr. Nicolson," a heavy-set official insisted, "you can't leave. Your exit papers aren't in order. And this passport photo does not look like you. Please come with us. You will have to leave another day." Fortunately, a Heath aide told the officials I was a vital member of Mr. Heath's entourage and had to leave that night; an hour later I was on board the flight home. Out of Iraqi airspace, the hostages spoke freely for the first time. I had five hours to get their stories on film for the network news—unmolested except for a rival reporter from another network. She was somehow a very comforting threat.

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Why the Japanese love French art.

PIC-AH-SO

By Michael Lewis

GINZA, JAPAN

In the past several years there has been an orgy of art loving in Ginza, the center of Japan's picture trade. And while the art business elsewhere goes limp, small dealers continue to stack themselves on top of one another in the tall thin buildings of central Tokyo like Pringles in a can. The businesses materialize suddenly, filled with dozens of lots from the most recent sale at Sotheby's or Christie's. I visited one well-hung shop that had been a mah-jongg parlor only eight months before; another was owned and managed part time by a man who spent the other half of his day selling Toyotas. "You don't need to do anything to make money," one of the Ginza dealers told me, explaining the increase in art dealers. "You just sit there and wait for the crowds."

The man who said this was sunk in a soft chair at the back of his gallery flipping through a stack of French Impressionists offered by a visiting American dealer. Beside him sat another dealer, who handed me his card. The card listed the sorts of businesses that, after a few days of gallery hopping, I had come to expect of the Japanese picture dealer: real estate development, finance, trading companies, and other amorphous occupations. Then I noticed that beneath his Japanese name was a most un-Japanese title: the Baron of Mordeth. You see, he shyly explained, he had just purchased this little shire in the North of England . . . didn't plan to rename all the streets after himself or anything . . . didn't really want anyone to know. . . . "Why do you bother keeping a gallery here?" I asked him, eager to discover the footprints of his domestic social climbing. "Because I have a building," he said.

For nearly a century Americans have been cast ingloriously alongside their more mannered European cousins in the role of arrivistes. Now even a Texan graduated from the Waterlily School of Interior Decoration has a potential object of lofty disdain: money even newer than his own. The chance to ridicule the motives and methods of Japanese art accumulation is one of the luxuries afforded Americans as they watch Japan push past them, on toward industrial hegemony.

But aside from a few of the more sensational purchases by Japanese businessmen—the van Gogh purchased for $39.9 million by Yasuda Fire & Marine, the van Gogh and Renoir bought for $160 million by a 74-year-old paper manufacturer and fanatical art collector named Ryoei Saito—it is hard to find in Ginza grotesque, drop-trousered, American-style displays of purchasing power. If the usual social motives—lust for prestige, longing for a better class of friends, desire to make new money old—exist in Japan, they are well disguised. A lot of Japanese buyers not only don't care very much about what they buy, they don't even wish to *appear* to care. "I used to try to encourage taste," says the New York art dealer Ann Richards Nitze, who has operated in Japan for fifteen years. "I used to say to buyers, 'You are going to be living with them, so choose the one *you* would like.' That little speech got me nowhere in Japan. They couldn't care less."

To begin to understand what is happening in Ginza you have to stop thinking of a Renoir as a painting and start thinking of it as a financial instrument. For the Japanese nouveau riche a Renoir is simply a chance to grow richer; it has many of the properties of a bond sitting in Bermuda out of the reach of tax authorities. Whether this is better or worse than our own treatment of art I leave for rich Texans to decide. A small item in late September in *The Japan Times*, for example, exposed the activities of a Japanese art collector named Kojiro Futai. He had managed a computer software company called Nippon Timeshare, from which he had embezzled 275 million yen ($2 million). With the money, he had bought, in cash, a Chagall, a Japanese Impressionist, and some ceramics.

No baron in Ginza would have been shocked if Futai turned up with his suitcase full of yen and asked for a Chagall. Every one of the dozen or so dealers I asked had done deals of $1 million in cash. "Until now," said the owner of Endo Gallery, "most of the pictures have been bought with 'black money.' " He went on to tell how "sometimes a rich man comes to the gallery and carries us to the garage. He never say who he is or where he from. In the trunk of his car is 500,000,000 yen [$3 million]. He say, 'I want Renoir.' " The owner of the Tokuro Gallery told me a similar story about a man in sunglasses who arrived with a briefcase filled with $2 million. "I ask him his name," he said, "and he says, 'No, I have no name.' So in that case after he buys I put the name Mr. Kaifu, Mr. Tanaka, or Mr. Nakasone. Ha, ha, ha." The owner of the Miura Gallery was similarly amused when I asked him how his customers transport their wealth to his gallery. "Uuumpphm!" he said, and made as if he were schlepping a pair of heavy suitcases through his front door.

The usual reason for paying cash in Ginza is not to hide stolen money but to evade taxes. The Japanese monetary authorities, unlike their American counterparts, do not require the reporting of movement of large amounts of cash. A Japanese picture dealer can legally accept suitcases full of unreported yen, so the sorts of people who have on hand such stuffed suitcases—dentists, doctors, gangsters, real estate operators—have found art a convenient store of wealth. What is more, in assessing art objects the Japanese tax office, for reasons the officials there wouldn't explain to me, generally accept the valuation declared by the owner.

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That, I was told, usually comes in around 10 percent of market value. The loophole is welcome in a land of confiscatory taxes. If a rich Japanese paid the full inheritance tax on land, he would retain less than half his family's holdings. If instead he borrows against his land and buys paintings with the money, the land (saddled with debt) passes down free of tax. The pictures would be taxed, of course, but at a fraction of the rate.

No doubt Ryoei Saito has made the same calculation. Saito, like a lot of Japanese these days, owns hundreds of millions of dollars of land purchased years ago for a song, and he must be wondering how to pass down this windfall intact to his son. "I put my real estate into mortgage and I will continue to buy," he said after secreting $160 million in his Renoir and van Gogh. He also said that $160 million was cheap for such rare items, exhibiting the usual magnanimity of the rich when they are spending large sums of money that might otherwise go to the government.

That still doesn't explain why Saito and others buy Renoirs instead of Japanese objects. The most common explanation is that they feel some patriotic link to French Impressionism because the Impressionists studied Japanese wood-block prints. There might be some truth in this—one Japanese collector told me with evident pride that van Gogh in moments of madness believed himself to be Japanese. The trouble with the theory is that the slowest-moving Impressionists in Ginza are those that refer explicitly to Japan, such as Renoir's women in kimono and Degas's fan-shaped paintings. "I cannot sell paintings that look Japanese," says Nitze. "My Japanese clients like things that look French." My own theory (as an American with a stake in this) is that the new collectors have snuggled up to Renoir and van Gogh out of the same fear of asserting taste that propelled Japanese women in unprecedented numbers into the arms of Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and Christian Dior.

In any case first causes are now irrelevant, overshadowed by a matter of modern finance: the belief, widely held in Japan, that since the prices of French Impressionism have risen five times in five years, they will continue to rise. "The first reason Japanese people buy is to save the tax. The second reason Japanese people buy is because paintings are going up and stock market is going down," said the owner of the former mahjongg parlor. Several funds are now being created to invest in art, and one company has even sold shares in pictures. All like to say they are "interested in art," and that may be; but they are far more interested in interest.

Until recently the speculative urge in Japan has been channeled into stocks and land. Now that the stock market has collapsed and the Bank of Japan has promised that bank lending to real estate speculators will slow—i.e., the real estate market won't be allowed to rise—guess where the lucky winners are to be found? The Japanese picture trade has been overrun by real estate speculators. One, Tomonori Tsurumaki, recently paid $51.3 million for a Picasso to hang in the middle of his $500 million racetrack. Another, Yasumichi Morishita, the head of Aska International, has bought 140 French Impressionists for $160 million in the last eighteen months. Like a lot of land barons, Tsurumaki and Morishita are also alleged to be loan sharks.

The picture bubble represents the first time Japanese speculators have drawn a bead on objects that don't earn a financial return. So it is mildly alarming that the bankers who grew fat lending to speculators have tagged along for the cultural joyride and started lending money against art. The picture dealers in Ginza are seeing a new trick to which Japan's commercial bankers long ago grew accustomed. A man wearing sunglasses on a cloudy day, one of Japan's new lovers of the arts, walks into a gallery and selects a million-dollar picture. He makes a down payment on it of, say, $300,000. He then removes it to a bank, which lends him the full value of the picture. With his million dollars he visits other galleries and buys more pictures on margin. In this way he is able to pyramid his art collection as he once pyramided his stock portfolio. Mrs. Chieko Hasegawa, the owner of the Nichido Gallery, Japan's largest, says that "we watch out for this kind of man. I keep telling my people: Be Careful! Be Careful!" Who knows—the Texan may yet have his fun.

MICHAEL LEWIS is the author of *Liar's Poker* (W. W. Norton) and writes a column for *Vanity Fair*.

A crash course in Afro-centrism.

RACISM 101

By Andrew Sullivan

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The Second National Conference on the Infusion of African and African-American Content in the High School Curriculum took place in the Marriott Marquis hotel here over the weekend of November 2. By coincidence, it overlapped with the Big Game Hunters of North America. In the conference foyer large men in plaid shirts watched videos of antelopes staggering to their death, while dozens of high school teachers in African garb milled around them. Fixed on the wall above vendors selling *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the stuffed heads of bears stared impassively forward, their jaws levered open, rug-style.

After two days of seminars, I began to get a sense of how the bears felt. The aim of the conference, it turned out, was not how best to teach the black American and African experience in the classroom and to weave it into a multicultural American education. It was a bid to add energy to the movement to transform the high school curriculum by giving it an exclusively Afrocentric base.

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Behind this endeavor lay the conviction that all Western knowledge is a corruption of Egyptian, i.e., black African, thought, and must therefore be junked. Schoolchildren, black and white, should be taught everything—math, history, art, science, English—from a black African perspective.

The conference was sponsored by, among others, Gillette, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Macmillan, *Science Weekly*, and BellSouth. Its agenda, charted in a 1983 text known as the Portland African-American Base-line essays, has been adopted in high schools in Portland, Oregon, and is being implemented in Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C. The conference organizer, Asa Hilliard, is on the committee to overhaul New York state's high school curriculum. The meeting was addressed by Thomas Sobol, New York state commissioner of education. More than a thousand high school teachers and administrators attended from all parts of the country. Glowing reports were broadcast on CNN and NPR.

My orientation began with a talk by Theophile Obenga of Marien N'Gouabi University in Gabon about how Greek philosophy was plagiarized from black African Egypt. It continued with an attack on Stanford's controversial new multicultural curriculum, by Joyce King of Santa Clara University. "The people in power want to maintain a myth: that our common culture is multicultural," she argued. "But the common culture of America is a system based on racism and hierarchy. . . . Inclusion is inclusion in somebody else's story. . . . You can imagine all the Platos and Iliads and Greeks that stayed on the list."

Professor King was not the only one to stick it to the Greeks. After two days of seminars, Plato and Aristotle were vilified about as regularly as Reagan and Bush. This was strange since, according to the speakers, Plato and Aristotle had also derived their entire thought from black Africa. The irony was resolved by describing the Greeks as the West's "affirmative action kids," preferred by Western scholars for their race, but not as smart as Africans. In one lecture, "affirmative action kids" was contemptuous shorthand for anybody from Xenophon to Herodotus. Whenever they were mentioned, the audience—schoolteachers and administrators, about four-fifths black and one-fifth white—snickered.

One of the most popular talks of the weekend was given by Wade Nobles, who runs a "Manhood Development and Training Program" for troubled black males in a multiracial high school in Oakland, California. He began with a request from a pastor for permission to begin. This was to follow the African custom of seeking permission of elders before engaging in any communal activity. Dressed in a long, lilac-blue robe, he carried a fetish with him to the podium: a small sacred object to link him with his ancestors and to ward away evil.

It was imperative, Nobles argued, that black education be rid of white influences. "When we adopt other people's theories, we are like Frankenstein doing other people's wills. It's like someone drinking some good stuff, vomiting it, and then we have to catch the vomit and drink it ourselves." In case the audience was still unclear about his precise meaning, he elaborated: "The Greeks gave back the vomit of the African way. . . . Don't become the vomit-drinkers!" "Teach, brother, teach!" cried a woman behind me. A black woman in front of me put her arm around her white male companion and grinned at him. "We can resist disease," Nobles went on, "but we have to inoculate our community."

The essence of European culture, Nobles argued, was "linear polarities." The West focused on fact and fiction, proof and unreality, the separate entities of male and female. African civilization rejected these dichotomies, and was concerned with the invisible, the indivisibility of the male and female entities, and the irrelevance of time: "Our beginning was not on the clock: we *were* the clock." The Genesis story pointed not to the choice between good and evil, but to the wisdom of the serpent in remaining true to himself. And everything pointed to the racial superiority of black Africans: "We are the creative cause. . . . Black folk *be*. We *be*. We be doin' it. And our bodies tell us our physical essence and we don't listen. Our fundamental meaning has been changed from being to doing. We have to go from being to becoming. . . . These middle-class people don't understand that you don't *do*. You have to *be*."

Nobles is not a marginal figure. For several sections of his talk, the audience recited his well-rehearsed lines as if remembering some familiar litany of faith. During the question-and-answer session, most teachers asked how to get their schools in touch with his program. There was a slight qualm from a young woman that Nobles was only concerned with males, to which he retorted, "We're not talking all this silly sexist stuff white women have us running behind." Little protest emerged about the idea of teaching Egyptian hieroglyphs, cleansing rituals, numerology, and physics to ninth-graders. As to the prospect of such children getting jobs, Nobles replied, "When we educate a black man, we're not educating him for a job, we're educating him for eternity."

Thomas Sobol followed Nobles on the agenda. He'd fought a lonely battle, as he portrayed it, to support the conference's objectives as education commissioner in New York state. But he realized his limits: "I'm a white middle-aged male. I can't help that." His speech argued against the melting-pot image of America and in favor of a "mosaic." "We will not solve the problems of education until we come to terms with the problems of race and class." The audience took his sincerity quietly, the only awkward moment coming when he noted that he still felt that "our Western tradition of democratic institutions and the rule of law must be maintained."

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The woman next to me complained that this was precisely what she was against. At the end, Leonard Jeffries, chairman of the department of black studies at City College of New York, who believes that multicultural education is "mental genocide," yelled opposition to Sobol's moderation. "I understand where you're coming from," Sobol replied. "You may not believe I understand it, but I do. It comes out of pain and anger and injustice. In my limited capacity to understand it, I understand it."

The major social event of the conference was the Ashanti Enstoolment ceremony, held in the Imperial Ballroom. An enstoolment is a mark of respect for an African elder—in this case John Henrik Clarke, professor emeritus at Hunter College in New York—and involves an elaborate lowering of the man three times onto the seat of learning. The ceremony began with the blowing of a shell-horn and the beating of African drums. Professors and teachers processed in elaborate African costume; Jeffries held a stick aloft; young girls performed a beautiful barefoot dance. A minister poured water from a jug north, south, east, and west. As he poured to the east, he asked the thousand or so in the audience to invoke the names of their ancestors. The names of "Marcus," "Malcolm," "Elijah Muhammed," rang through the hall. "Ancestors, reclaim us, rename us, in Atlanta, in diaspora," intoned the minister.

A woman in a large headdress came on the stage: "May I ask the elders for permission to speak?" They gave permission. "Good evening," she said to the crowd, who responded meekly. "Now we can do better than that," she retorted, reminding us that this was, after all, a conference of high school teachers. Then five bare-chested men in sashes, with gold bangles around their heads, paraded in, carrying a vast yellow parasol topped by a small ivory elephant. Underneath: a large, stern woman, apparently the "queen mother," and, behind her, the diminutive Clarke, dressed in a suit and tie. Jeffries ranted for a while on the podium: "Education is not just about passing exams to get jobs. It's about moving forward and tapping into our ancestors." We then recited a pledge: "We, the African community, in the hells of North America, do pledge our minds, our selves, and our bodies to further the struggle . . . because the work that we Africans have to do is the work of eternity, the work of the pyramid builders."

There was something about the event that finally began to sicken. It started with the expensive costumes of the predominantly middle-class crowd. It continued with some of the points already made that day: that ancient Egypt was uniformly a black African culture, that no Semitic peoples were involved in the building of the pyramids, that no Jews were enslaved in Egypt, that Western philosophy was "vomit"—and the ingenuousness with which such ideas were received. It culminated in Clarke's assertion that no black American should soil herself with Christianity: "At what point do we stop this mental prostitution to a religion invented by foreigners? All religion is artificial. All the major religions of the world are male chauvinist murder cults."

Maybe what I picked to see at the conference was unrepresentative of the event as a whole. The speaker at one session spoke sensibly of the need when teaching about Africa to avoid racist stereotypes, and to drop the "jungle" image of a diverse continent, only 5 percent of which is actual jungle. But at no session did I hear anything about interracial tolerance and understanding; at no point support for American gains in cultural pluralism; or anything that argued that study of Africa was part of a broader ethic of awareness of the world as a whole. Reading the Portland essays for Afrocentric education, which are now the basis for reforms across the country, I found the same dogmatic reiteration of racial separatism and specious scholarship. The man who organized them and is on New York's curricular reform committee was standing on the podium during the enstoolment ceremony, smiling broadly.

Even if the scholarship were true, it's difficult to see the point of it all. The spirit is so ugly that even if it did generate racial pride, that pride would be synonymous with racial intolerance. And none of it addresses the pressing needs of young public high school kids, black and white, for a decent basic education or for genuine appreciation of black American history. It's sad enough, perhaps, that the educational establishment can turn a blind eye to this racism in its midst. But it's sadder still that what passes for an answer to the collapse of high school education these days is the institutionalization of hate. •

Democratization's hangover.

FREEDOM BUMMER

By Morton Kondracke

After the democratic triumphs that closed the 1980s with a once-per-century year of liberation, the 1990s figure to be an emotional downer.

Some heroes and heroines of the last decade will likely fail in this one. In the Philippines, Corazon Aquino, who brought down the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, has been unable to liberate the country from official corruption, economic inequality, and civil strife. Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto won her country's first free election in more than a decade in 1988, but got mired in political intrigue, was ousted from office at the behest of the military, and now has been trounced in what she claims was a rigged election.

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Mikhail Gorbachev, who let Eastern Europe go free and loosened Russia and her empire from totalitarian control, may have set the stage for chaos or civil war. Another hero of the 1980s, El Salvador's José Napoleón Duarte, was unable to control his country's military, stop its civil war, halt corruption, or work out a social compact between the private sector and the government. And Poland's Lech Walesa, having courageously led a peaceful democratic revolution against communism, shows signs of wanting to rule as an elected autocrat.

There are other disappointments pending. Peru is at the edge of financial ruin, beset by leftist insurrection, drug lords, and deep ethnic resentments, and could plunge back into military rule. Romania remains gripped by a legacy of Leninist dictatorship. Nicaragua, looted by the outgoing Sandinistas, seems locked in partisan combat and economic disorder. India may have to widen emergency rule. Kenya, once a semi-liberal one-party state, is sinking back into despotism. Burma's moving quest for democratic rule has been quashed by a brutal military dictatorship, which recently invaded the previously inviolate monasteries. Argentina, Brazil, and the newly free countries of Eastern Europe are all passing through painful economic adjustments that strain the discipline of their citizens.

The Reagan administration created the misimpression that democratizing consisted merely of holding an election. But now it's clear that the initial throwing off of dictatorship is a transition that has to be followed by a difficult process of consolidation before a country reaches the reasonably safe harbor of stable democracy. Mostly the task of moving forward is the countries' own responsibility, but there are things that well-wishers can do to help. The United States says the right things and actually is doing and spending a fair amount, but the Bush administration still needs to organize itself better to make democracy-building a top priority.

Over the years American academics like Robert Dahl, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset have clarified what it takes for countries to reach full democracy. Drawing on their work, the president of the National Endowment for Democracy, Carl Gershman, recently produced a list of eight phenomena that are associated with mature democratic polities. The eight are: regular, meaningful elections; stable and representative political parties; a vigorous free press and other vehicles of information exchange and debate; a vigorous civil society (i.e., organization of public and private interest groups) that broadens participation beyond the political realm; a market economy tempered by trade unions and social welfare programs; an independent judiciary securing civil liberties; democratic control of the military and police; and a cultural commitment to democratic ideas among political elites and the population.

There is naturally considerable debate among academics and politicians over whether material and educational aid to these kinds of subsidiary structures strengthens democracy overall, and, if so, which institutions need the most attention. If elections were the Reagan administration's top priority, economic transition gets the most money and attention from the Bush administration and Congress—to the point that some experts worry that the United States is giving short shrift to political institution-building.

Different countries obviously need different kinds of attention—some supportive, some punitive—depending where they are on the spectrum from closed dictatorship to stable democracy. Several attempts have been made to define the spectrum, the best known being Freedom House's annual rating of all nations on a 1-7 scale for both political and civil liberty, and its ranking of nations as "free" (57 in January 1987, 67 today), "partly free" (57 and 50), and "not free" (53 and 48).

Preparing its 1991 survey, Freedom House tentatively estimates that 65 percent of the world's population now lives in "free" or "partly free" countries, the highest percentage since the survey began in 1973, when 53 percent were so situated. Freedom House anticipates showing that six countries have become free in 1989 and 1990 (Chile, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Namibia, Panama, and Poland), while eight went from "not free" to "partly free" (Benin, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Gabon, the Comoros Islands, São Tomé, Mongolia, and the Soviet Union).

The problem with such systems of ranking and classification is that they don't show a country's potential for and momentum of change. That can be fixed partly by charting a country's Freedom House scores over time, creating a kind of democratic fitness graph. The raters also need to develop a "perestroika index," indicating how far a country has progressed toward a free market, and a socioeconomic index based on literacy, health, and income equality.

In addition, the world needs a progress-in-danger watch list, which now would include the Philippines, Pakistan, Peru, the Soviet Union, El Salvador, India, Romania, Guatemala, Sri Lanka, and Nicaragua; and a difficult-passage list, including Argentina, Poland, and Brazil, which are all in the throes of economic dislocation. And there ought to be a head-of-the-class list containing those countries making the most progress, which might include Chile, Ecuador, Thailand, Bolivia, Mexico, Uruguay, South Korea, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

Why some countries succeed and others fail is the subject of continuous discussion among academics and democracy activists in the government and private organizations—what's become known as the "democracy industry." Most are convinced that the country most likely to make it next to full, stable democracy is Chile, which emerged from the sixteen-year military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in 1989 enjoying strong economic growth and has elected a civilian president, Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin,

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who is dedicated to maintaining a free market economic system. The Chilean example (and those of Ecuador and Uruguay) suggests that the most important single factor in determining whether a country will succeed is a prior democratic tradition, which was savagely interrupted in Chile's case by Pinochet's 1973 military coup.

A democratic tradition also helped Greece throw off military rule in 1974. Spain and Portugal, the two other countries moving to full democracy in the past fifteen years, lacked similar traditions, but they were influenced by strongly democratic neighbors in Western Europe. The experts think that tradition and location give Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary an advantage that other countries, including Pakistan, Argentina, the Philippines, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, do not have. In each of these cases, the military often either has ruled directly or through puppets. Many of these countries also lack stable political parties; the parties they have are often merely vehicles for the ambitions of one leader or clan. Other severe handicaps for the democratizing process are an Islamic tradition, deep economic inequalities, ethnic divisions, and a culture of violence. Some nations, like Iraq, are subject to them all.

Chile's apparent success (and the continuing difficulties of China, the Soviet Union, and Poland) renews the issue raised by Jeane Kirkpatrick in 1980 as to whether authoritarian regimes provide a better basis for movement toward democracy than totalitarian ones. It seems that they do, provided the authoritarian rulers are willing to permit liberalization. Other once-authoritarian regimes making rapid progress toward democracy are former military regimes such as Thailand, Turkey, South Korea, and Mexico, a one-party state now liberalizing its election laws and its economy. On the other hand, the pattern does not always hold. Formerly totalitarian Czechoslovakia and Hungary are moving much faster to full freedom than authoritarian Singapore, Zaire, and Indonesia.

With few totalitarian nations left, a more important issue for debate is whether nondemocratic regimes are best off pursuing perestroika first and glasnost second, or the reverse. Chile, South Korea, Mexico, Taiwan, and Thailand are perestroika-first models, while the travail of the Soviet Union suggests that glasnost-first (or, at least, partial glasnost) is extremely risky. The crucial tests of the question will come in Eastern Europe and South America, where free speech and elections have preceded painful economic transitions. As Polish Solidarity leader Bronislaw Geremek put it in a recent article, "We know that democracy is the first condition of economic reform. On the other hand, to be frank, the dire economic situation in Poland is now the main danger to democracy."

Theoretical analysis of what it takes to build and sustain democracy obviously is only a prelude to action. The Bush administration has declared, in statements by the president and Secretary of State James Baker, that America's "new mission" in the world is "the promotion and consolidation of democracy," but it has yet to formulate a full-blown strategy for the task or to provide centralized, top-level coordination.

It's not fair to say that this administration has done nothing to further the aim. It toppled Manuel Noriega, installed the elected government of Panama, and is providing it with $421 million in economic assistance. The administration used Air Force planes to rescue Corazon Aquino from an attempted coup and for 1991 has appropriated $600 million to the Philippines. The United States helped Violeta Chamorro defeat the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and budgeted $321 million last year in economic assistance. In El Salvador it has encouraged negotiations between the government and Communist rebels, and has demanded prosecution of human rights offenders in the military.

After a hesitant beginning, the administration requested $300 million in aid for Eastern Europe in the current fiscal year. Congress authorized $585 million ($932 million over three years), but actually appropriated $369 million, plus $70 million to fund the new European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The administration is encouraging private investment in Eastern Europe, offering most-favored-nation trade status to countries that advance democratically, and is furnishing technical assistance in economic adjustment and governance.

In Latin America the administration has arranged debt-reduction programs for Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela, and Uruguay, and proposed an Enterprise for the Americas Initiative, an offer to lower tariff barriers and move toward unfettered free trade throughout the hemisphere. Unfortunately, the Initiative was put on a back burner during the Persian Gulf crisis and Congress's budget maneuverings, and the only real movement toward free trade is with Mexico. The administration successfully fought off attempts in Congress to restrict trade in textiles but has made no moves to eliminate existing quotas on textiles and sugar, which would be a boon to developing economies in Latin America and Asia. But it is fighting for liberalized world trade through the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

What the administration lacks is a sense of overall direction for the democracy-building effort. When Baker and Bush are preoccupied with a crisis, as in the Persian Gulf, there's little movement on the democracy front. The administration will focus on high-visibility problems (such as Nicaragua or Panama), but ignore disasters elsewhere (as in Liberia and Kenya). The Agency for International Development's new administrator, Ronald Roskens, reportedly is seeking to take charge of democracy-promotion, but high-ranking State Department officials say that AID is such a hopelessly clogged bureaucracy that it can't accomplish its primary mission, economic development, let alone take over another one.

As part of its planning process, AID has developed a worthy list of institutions for the United States to help,

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including judicial systems, electoral administration and political parties, legislatures, public finance agencies, local government, civil supervision of the military, the media, grass-roots civic organizations, and democratic education.

Still, AID's budget for strengthening such institutions is only $109 million, whereas the total foreign aid budget is $17 billion. The overwhelming emphasis of American aid remains on economic rather than political development. In Eastern Europe only $19 million is budgeted for democratic institutions, while $420 million is being directed toward economic conversion. Experts on Eastern Europe are worried that the United States may be helping set up a capitalist system controlled by members of the old Communist nomenklatura, instead of strengthening the democratic activists whose courage toppled the old system.

Other problems may arise over turf, duplication, and effectiveness. Some of the areas that AID wants to enter are already being occupied by NED and its subordinate institutes run by the AFL-CIO, the two political parties, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. These functions include assisting political parties, unions, the media, and grass-roots organizations. The U.S. Information Agency also has democracy-building functions, although its primary business is spreading the word about U.S. foreign policy. According to various officials, an appropriate division of labor would be for U.S. government agencies to help foreign governments strengthen their institutions, but leave non-government (sometimes, opposition) institutions to the government-funded but privately managed NED. NED's budget went from $16.7 million in fiscal year 1990 to $25 million in 1991. It is supposed to get $40 million in 1992, and it should.

It sounds good for President Bush to say that democracy-building should be the new purpose of American foreign policy, but if he means it, he and Congress need to revamp (or at least review) the agencies, policies, and spending priorities built up during the last forty-five years primarily to contain communism. With communism dissolving, other priorities are bound to place strong demands on the government's energy and resources, including domestic needs and purely economic interests abroad. Many Americans will assume that political development around the world is none of our concern. If the president strongly disagrees, he needs to do something about it. •

The side effects of RU 486.

DRUG OF CHOICE

By Dorothy Wickenden

In the mid-1980s, as word of the French abortion pill rippled across the world, the new drug was greeted as a thing of awesome powers. Pro-choicers eagerly proclaimed that RU 486 would render both surgical abortion and the anti-abortion movement obsolete. If a woman suspected she was pregnant, she would go to her medicine cabinet and, in peace and privacy, swallow the pill. With this simple act she could banish the emotional, the physical, and even much of the moral trauma accompanying the decision to have an abortion. Described by its inventor, Etienne-Emile Baulieu, as a "contra-gestive" (because it impedes gestation rather than conception), RU 486 would in effect erase the distinction between a contraceptive and an abortifacient. Anti-abortionists, horrified at the euphoria, quickly marshaled their forces against the drug, calling it a "chemical time bomb" and a "death pill."

The pro-choicers have sounded more sober about RU 486 over the past couple of years. Their initial hopes for the drug as "the ultimate act of reproductive privacy" proved to be, as Bill Hamilton of Planned Parenthood puts it, "a myopic dream." The anti-abortionists' continual boycott threats have cowed the patent owner and sole manufacturer, Roussel Uclaf of France, and its parent company, Hoechst AG, a German multinational, into tightly restricting access to the drug. In France, the only country where RU 486 is actually available to women outside of clinical trials, each pill must be registered, and the drug is dispensed only by designated clinics, only after a pregnancy has been confirmed, and only through the seventh week. And though French doctors report impressive success with it as an abortifacient, the procedure turns out to be neither quick nor painless nor totally private. Patients are required to make four visits to a designated clinic, on the second of which they are given synthetic prostaglandin to reduce the risk of hemorrhage and help induce contractions.

But the more recent news doesn't look good for the

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anti-abortionists. Distribution of RU 486 will start in Great Britain within the next year. Scandinavia and the Netherlands are expected to follow soon, and Sweden has begun testing it as a once-a-month contraceptive. Spain's Ministry of Health has made an official demand for the pill, and Baulieu, who still works for Roussel, says the Soviet Union will likely be next. The World Health Organization continues its own clinical studies on RU 486 in China, India, Hong Kong, and Cuba. Perhaps most alarming of all from the anti-abortionists' point of view, RU 486 is once again being described as a miracle drug—this time by American doctors who say it may prove just as effective in treating a range of deadly diseases as it is in terminating pregnancy. William Regelson, an oncologist at the Medical College of Virginia, declares, "If RU 486 did not have abortion associated with it, it would be considered a major breakthrough drug."

In the August 22/29 issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, Regelson and two co-authors describe the proven and potential uses for RU 486 in treating some kinds of breast cancer and brain tumors, Cushing's syndrome—a terminal disease characterized by hypertension, osteoporosis, diabetes, and infections—and even AIDS. RU 486 is known as a "hormone antagonist" because it prevents cells from responding to certain hormones as they normally would. It arrests the course of pregnancy by blocking the action of progesterone, without which an embryo cannot survive. Some tumors and cancers thrive on hormones as well, as do all stress-related diseases. Cushing's syndrome, for example, is caused by an excess production of cortisol, which is blocked by RU 486.

A program at the University of Southern California School of Medicine is using RU 486 in a small group of patients with a type of meningioma, or brain cancer, that cannot be cured with surgery. Martin H. Weiss, who heads the study with Stephen Grunberg, says that it is the only medical treatment that has ever been shown to work on these patients; a third of them have been responding to the treatment. George Chrousos, a senior investigator at the National Institutes of Health, who conducted a five-year study of RU 486 on Cushing's syndrome sufferers, describes "miraculous improvement" on eight of the twelve patients in his study within weeks after treatment began. RU 486 may even be helpful to women who *want* to have a baby. Doctors at the University of California, San Diego, are doing a pilot study of RU 486 as a treatment for endometriosis, a common cause of infertility in women; and many believe that it could be used to induce labor in difficult deliveries, thus reducing the need for Caesarian sections.

All this sounds too good to be true, and some of it may be. The hopes that RU 486 may help AIDS patients, for example, are based on little more than informed speculation, and researchers who had hopes that it might cure glaucoma have been disappointed with the results of their animal studies. Arthur Caplan, director of the Center for Biomedical Ethics at the University of Minnesota, points out that "the rhetoric of the abortion debate has gotten the science inflamed." Doctors, no less than the pro-choice and anti-abortion forces, have their own interests to protect, and it's not surprising that they are among those who tend to make extravagant claims about RU 486.

Anti-abortionists, of course, are quick to downplay its curative potential—well aware that once it is approved in the United States for other uses, doctors could legally prescribe it as an abortifacient as well, as long as abortion itself remains legal. John Willke, president of the National Right to Life Committee, says, "People are using the theoretical possibility of therapeutic use to get the drug into the country on a massive level for lethal use." Yet he insists that his organization objects only to studies on RU 486 as an abortifacient. "We couldn't stop the other research if we wanted to," he declares.

That's true, but they can impede it. Hoechst hastily withdrew the drug in September 1988, only a month after the French government had approved it. A Roussel stockholders' meeting had been the scene of an anti-abortion protest, and the National Right to Life Committee in Washington and Catholic groups in France had issued a boycott threat against Hoechst and Roussel. Extremists proclaimed that I. G. Farben, the ancestor company of Hoechst, manufactured cyanide for Hitler's death camps. Distribution of RU 486 was resumed under orders from the French government, which owns 36 percent of Roussel Uclaf. Undeterred, the anti-abortionists kept up their boycott threats, and in December 1988 Roussel devised a set of criteria that countries have to meet before they can receive the drug: abortion must be legal and accepted by medical, public, and political opinion; prostaglandin must be available; distribution must be strictly controlled; and the patient must be required to sign a consent form declaring that if the treatment fails (as it does in up to 4 percent of women), she will have a surgical abortion. This would eliminate the possibility of babies born with defects—an unlikely prospect, many doctors claim, since RU 486 is taken in a single dose and the drug is metabolized quickly, but one that understandably concerns the manufacturer.

According to Roussel, the United States does not qualify for the drug—even though abortion is legal and supported by a majority of the American public. By "accepted by public opinion," the company clearly means "uncontroversial"—a much tougher standard, which thus far essentially has given a noisy minority veto power over a major medical development. Willke vows that if RU 486 comes to the United States, he'll mount a worldwide boycott of every product made by Roussel and Hoechst, and, he warns, "It'll be a whopper." Hoechst AG owns two New Jersey-based companies: Hoechst-Roussel Pharmaceuticals and Hoechst Celanese Corporation, a chemical company that produces everything from carpet fibers to tire cord. Hoechst Celanese alone has annual revenues in the

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United States of $6 billion. American pharmaceutical companies, which could push for a license from Roussel, apparently have no intention of doing so. "Do you have any idea what would happen in the U.S. if the drug were being distributed?" one unnamed senior executive at a drug company told *The Washington Post* when RU 486 was issued in France. "The market is potentially huge and the drug appears worthy. But who needs the headache?"

Some researchers who covet the new wonder drug are exasperated by Roussel's extreme caution about relinquishing it. William Regelson and his co-authors say that the threatened boycott has "largely frozen clinical trials," citing as evidence Roussel's cancellation of a meeting that it was to attend in April 1989 at Memorial Sloan-Kettering in New York to help the National Cancer Institute organize a multicenter study of RU 486 for treating breast cancer. Regelson says he was later told by a Hoechst employee that the company had pulled back because of the hostile political climate. Gary Hodgen, president of the Jones Institute for Reproductive Medicine, who has conducted numerous studies on RU 486 since 1982, says of Roussel and Hoechst, "They have limited access far more strictly than they did in years prior to 1989, no question about that." Baulieu denies these charges. It is high costs and the need for quality control, he insists, that have restricted the number of studies. And apparently not all doctors have had trouble getting the drug. Michael Kettle, who is working on the endometriosis study at San Diego, says that he and his co-workers have received active support from Roussel in their work.

On one point, at least, most people agree: Roussel's tight hold on RU 486 has crimped research in some critical areas. Since the early '80s the National Institutes of Health, which is barred from doing any abortion-related studies, has been conducting clinical trials of RU 486 for its use as a contraceptive and cellular studies on it as a possible future cure for breast cancer. However, one of NIH's most promising studies on RU 486 has come to a halt. Unlike women who use it as an abortifacient, patients with Cushing's syndrome require massive doses on a daily basis for extended periods throughout their lives. Although NIH researchers were excited by the extraordinary progress shown by the patients in the study, for whom no other medical treatment is effective, NIH decided not to continue its study in part because of concerns that it would be unable to obtain the quantities needed to sustain the patients' recovery.

One curious sign of the anti-abortionists' discomfort about RU 486 is their rhetoric. When Willke talks about the drug, he emphasizes the threat that it poses to women's health. He calls it a "chemical Dalkon Shield," "a powerful, poisonous steroid" that "kills unborn babies, will injure and kill women, and will cause an epidemic of fetal deformity." This would seem to be a shrewd tactic. The grisly history of fertility control—DES, Thalidomide, and the early birth control pill, as well as the Dalkon Shield—has made many women dubious about being subjected once again to an experimental drug whose long-term effects are unknown.

But this line of attack has already been shattered by the powerful medical establishment. The American Medical Association and *The New England Journal of Medicine*, among others, have declared that RU 486, when properly administered, is as safe as surgical abortion—one of the most common and least dangerous of all surgical procedures. The AMA has endorsed testing RU 486 here and is supporting efforts to convince Roussel to release it. Moreover, doctors are confident that as research continues, the drug—like the early birth control pill—will either be improved upon or replaced by a more sophisticated successor. NIH researchers hope that within the next several years they will have figured out the appropriate dose of RU 486 to be used as a birth control pill, perhaps taken only once or several times a month, and that it will have fewer side effects than the current pill.

Anti-abortionists should be the first to recognize the power of high-tech medicine to affect the political and ethical climate surrounding abortion. Sonograms have enabled us to peer inside the womb and detect the heartbeats of fetuses as young as six-and-a-half weeks, a development that helped to raise doubts among many whose support for abortion during the early months of pregnancy previously had been unqualified. RU 486 seems to be having precisely the opposite effect—removing some of the moral onus from abortion. Most people—even many in the anti-abortion rank and file—have fewer qualms about the idea of aborting a three-quarter-inch embryo than a fetus at three months, complete with tiny fingers and toes and all of its organs. So a pill that would both enable women to have earlier abortions and result in fewer late ones would doubtless be widely seen here, as it has been in France and other countries, as a welcome medical advance. And once its other potential uses are known, and the clamor for the drug increases, the issue will become even more problematic, not least among those who believe RU 486 should be available to prolong health and save lives but have serious scruples about it as an abortifacient.

On the other hand, Willke's health warnings about RU 486 have doubtless proved effective in raising the specter of lawsuits, which scare drug manufacturers in the United States as much as anti-abortion protesters do. Ever since the Dalkon Shield disaster, pharmaceuticals and insurance companies have retreated almost entirely from the field of birth control. In fact, insurance is no longer available in this country for clinical testing of most contraceptives. And even if a U.S. drug company decided to ignore the threat of political harassment and financial vulnerability, it would first have to wind its way through the byzantine—and politicized—regulatory maze. After getting a license from Roussel, a company would present a protocol to the Food and Drug Administration for its own round of expensive tests on RU 486 and

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synthetic prostaglandin, and, finally, submit the drug application to the lengthy FDA approval process—an even more complex procedure when two drugs are involved. The FDA, for its part, has already revealed its susceptibility to political pressure: in June 1989, at the urging of Senator Jesse Helms, Representatives Henry Hyde and Robert Dornan, and others, it banned the import of RU 486 into the United States for private use.

Limitations on birth control research, of course, mean fewer and less effective means of family planning for Americans. This only perpetuates the country's staggering rates of teenage pregnancy and abortion, both of which are among the highest in the industrialized world. A report of the National Research Council estimates that between 1.2 million and 3 million unwanted pregnancies occur in the United States each year, and that about half of the 1.5 million abortions each year are due to contraceptive failure.

Steps are being taken, though, to break the impasse. Some members of Congress, galvanized by an administration that, like its predecessor, has been more receptive to the demands of a powerful interest group than to the idea of pressing forward in controversial areas of medical research, have begun to move. In July, at the instigation of Representative Barbara Boxer of California, seventy members signed a letter urging Roussel to make RU 486 available for testing in the United States, in the hope that eventually Roussel will be convinced that the anti-abortionists represent neither the views of established medicine nor the will of the public at large. In late October the reauthorization bill for NIH collapsed after conservatives vehemently objected to several abortion-related provisions—among them proposals for new centers to study contraception and infertility, which they claimed might lead to federal funding of research on RU 486. But this month Representative Ron Wyden of Oregon is holding a hearing on RU 486, in an attempt to smoke out the administration's position on the drug, and to raise questions about the extent to which the politics of abortion is impeding research that could save lives.

As for the pharmaceutical companies, eventually they may find the lure of profits more compelling than the fear of boycotts and litigation—especially if RU 486 brings with it some of the health benefits that are predicted. The boycott threat could turn out to be a paper tiger: it will be hard to convince Americans not to buy a laxative made by Hoechst-Roussel Pharmaceuticals because its parent company also owns the company that produces RU 486. And Hoechst-Roussel specializes in prescription drugs rather than over-the-counter products. Even the liability conundrum is not insoluble. Many have proposed devising an insurance scheme for controversial new drugs and devices that would assure companies they would only be liable if culpable error could be proved. An insurance pool would cover unforeseen casualties.

Meanwhile, a group of physicians in San Francisco—unwilling to wait for drug companies and the FDA—has attempted to get the testing started themselves. Theirs would be the first trial in the United States of RU 486 with prostaglandin. (An earlier study, at the University of Southern California, examined the efficacy of the drug alone.) California's attorney general, John Van de Kamp, has proposed that the state invoke a statute that allows California to test, manufacture, and market drugs within its own borders that are not yet approved by the FDA. Three hospitals have agreed to conduct the trials, but the doctors' plan has stalled because Roussel has refused their request for the drug.

However, Baulieu, an irrepressible advocate of his invention, is confident that RU 486 will soon find its way to the United States—and "not through the back door," as the Californians are proposing. "I don't see any reason to have partial distribution," he says. "As in the U.K., the pressure will be so strong that it will go ahead in the USA. Roussel will help when the conditions are better." Baulieu is advocating a joint undertaking that would include Roussel, a non-profit organization here (most likely Planned Parenthood), and a group of venture capitalists.

The anti-abortionists have raised legitimate questions about how RU 486 might be misused if it becomes a legal commodity here. What happens if a pregnant teenager gets hold of some pills in her second trimester, and thinks they'll solve her problem? Because the U.S. regulatory system is so decentralized, it will be more difficult to maintain the scrupulous controls over distribution that France has imposed. But this country would doubtless require abortion patients to undergo the same series of doctors' visits, to receive the pills and the prostaglandin only at clinics and hospitals, and to sign the same strict consent forms. And the United States isn't exactly slack about drug safety standards. RU 486 could be handled like any prescription drug that poses a threat to the fetus (such as the acne treatment Accutane, with doctors strictly screening patients and the FDA requiring detailed warning inserts along with the prescription). Or, if necessary, it could be deemed a "Class 3" drug, like barbiturates and amphetamines, which doctors cannot prescribe without a special license, and which requires a detailed accounting on the part of physicians and pharmacists to avoid forgeries and other abuses.

There is no denying that RU 486 is an eerie drug. Even the most ardent pro-choice advocates have to ask whether there isn't a critical distinction between a contraceptive and a "contra-gestive." But RU 486, like abortion itself, isn't going to go away—regardless of the restrictions that are placed on it. As more countries begin using the drug, demand for it here will increase. And if it is not approved and carefully regulated in the United States, a black market will certainly develop, with predictably unpleasant consequences. Thus Willke and his colleagues will have succeeded in creating exactly the circumstance he claims to fear the most: widespread misuse of a potent drug with possibly serious health hazards for women. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Troublemakers

There's no chicken-or-egg quandary about theater and film. We know which came first, and we know the legacy that theater bestowed on film—the plays, the ideas of dramatic action, the actors and the acting. We also know that film quickly fought hard to modify this theatrical legacy, to develop its own languages. Less often discussed is what film retained of the theater (like Renoir's deep-focus shot) and what, in more recent years, film has adopted from twentieth-century developments in stagecraft.

A good deal of the latter is used in **The Nasty Girl** (Miramax), a German film written and directed by Michael Verhoeven. He often isolates figures against an absolutely blank background or uses large atmospheric photographs as backdrops or slips in background comment. For instance, behind a judge in a courtroom, the allegorical figure of Justice snoozes on her throne, snoring a little, until she starts awake and resumes her classic pose. Anyone who has been to interesting theaters in this century has seen devices much like all the above.

Verhoeven uses cinematic abstractions as well. In the middle of veristic sequences, characters address the camera. In one case, he insists that we see the microphone at the end of a long boom. When members of a family confer on the sofa in their parlor about their town's attitude toward them, the sofa, with them aboard, sails through the town like a barge on a canal.

All these procedures may make the film sound like a fresh, bright comedy. This is a doubtful blessing because the picture, though it has satirical moments, is far from comic.

First, there's the title to consider. In German it's *Das Schreckliche Mädchen*. *Schreckliche* can mean a number of things—frightful, fearful, dreadful, terrible, and five other adjectives in my dictionary—but it certainly doesn't mean nasty. The English title misleads. This story, fictional but based on fact, is about Sonja, born and brought up in a Bavarian town, who wins a national contest for high school students with an essay on some bland subject, then for another contest decides to write an essay on what happened in her town during the years 1939-45. She isn't nasty, she is frightful, fearful, dreadful, terrible, etc.

At first, with chuckles and patronizing pats, officials shunt her off or feed her patent bunk. This only heats her zeal to uncover the truth. The search and research go on for some years, during which she marries and has two children, during which also she runs into more and more violent opposition from the town. Some of the results are rocks through her windows and the burning of her home.

She persists. She sues the town for the right of access to secret files, wins, writes her book (as it has become), and publishes it. After she receives awards in several foreign countries, her town honors her. Then she starts work on her next book, which will be about the fate of the Jews in her town during the Nazi years. Again—opposition.

Lena Stolze plays Sonja. In 1981 Stolze made her debut in Verhoeven's *The White Rose*, a film (based on fact) about the Munich students who spread anti-Nazi propaganda in 1942, were caught, and decapitated. Stolze played a leader of the small group, and as long as I breathe, I won't forget the last scene in her cell, a sunny morning in which she simply stands looking at the sky before she is led away to execution.

Here Verhoeven has Stolze play Sonja rather friskily, not a grim fighter for truth but a fairly ordinary girl, then a woman, who gets involved in a subject dealing with the town she loves and who, more like a stubborn child than a heroine, just won't be put off.

This approach, along with the techniques noted earlier, makes *The Nasty Girl* an odd hybrid—light-fingered Sacha Guitry storytelling applied to some of the most somber materials of the century. The disjuncture keeps us somewhat distant from a film that, we sense, ought to be making us feel more. It's fine that Verhoeven wanted to avoid the sententious, but he has done it at the price of achieving the serious.

Susan Sarandon has become a *grande horizontale* of American film. I can't quote statistics, but I wish I could: I'd like to know what proportion of her screen time she spends reclining. After

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Icicle Thief. *An Italian fantasy-satire interweaving 1950s neorealism and modern lush TV color. Maurizio Nichetti, the author-director, plays two roles. (Reviewed 10/1/90)* **Life and Nothing But.** *After the First World War, a French army unit searches for and identifies missing soldiers. Bertrand Tavernier's screenplay is inconclusive, but generally his writing and directing are in the tradition of Jean Renoir. (10/15/90)* **Postcards from the Edge.** *There's always room for good glitz. Meryl Streep and Shirley MacLaine as Hollywood daughter and mother in an entertaining comedy-drama. (10/8/90)* **Reversal of Fortune.** *The von Bülow case. Some of the legal stuff seems trite (though it's true), some of the scenes are flaky; but Barbet Schroeder directs with sizzle, Ron Silver as Alan Dershowitz ferrets fiercely, and Jeremy Irons as Claus von Bülow sweeps all before him. (11/19/90)* **—SK**

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such films as *Pretty Baby*, *The Hunger*, and *Bull Durham*, she carries on in **White Palace** (Universal). Of course she has no monopoly on the sport, but we're particularly aware of it with Sarandon—not because she's lovely and sexy, which she is, but because she is such a good actress that we don't need copious bedroom detail to compensate for lack of talent otherwise, as we do with, say, Kathleen Turner.

White Palace is a crossbreed of two very old formulas—the romance between working class and upper class, the romance between older woman and young man. (Sarandon plays a waitress in a hamburger joint called the White Palace.) The screenplay by Ted Tally and Alvin Sargent is said to have had a phony ending tacked on after early previews, but that's only the final falsity. More subtle ones pervade the whole film.

Let's concede the idea that the young man is willing to risk his good job and future for a woman who picks him up—and feels him up—in a dingy bar. Much stranger things have happened in the world, I hear. But the picture is based on two sentimentalities: working-class people are ipso facto more authentic than the upper strata, and (because of this?) working-class people have better sex than ritzier types. These, though the sex was only implied, were tenets of some of Hollywood's worst in the old days.

Setup scenes abound, like the one in which the man takes her to Thanksgiving dinner at the house of some friends. (He's Jewish but nice; they're Jewish but gargoyles.) This is all just to give Sarandon a chance to blow off steam at their stuffiness, then storm out. None of this would matter much, except for a few passages of genuine bewilderment and pain in the dialogue and the fact that Sarandon tries to find some truth in her role. And she can laugh—something that takes more talent than is generally recognized.

The man is James Spader, who supplied the third element in *sex, lies, and videotape*. Spader has a floating quality—an air of being unaware, bright though he is, that he's a victim of his own life. Since he doesn't have much passion, this ethereal quality gives him something else, a touch of poignancy. How long this will fascinate we are to learn.

Grim Update on the Comic Muse. In **Sibling Rivalry** (Castle Rock), an alleged farce written by Martha Goldhirsch and directed by Carl Reiner, a man dies of a heart attack immediately after sexual intercourse. If that isn't funny enough, the woman has later to remove the condom from the corpse's penis. •

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The Misfortune Teller

BY MARTHA NUSSBAUM

The Faces of Injustice by Judith N. Shklar

(Yale University Press, 160 pp, $19.95)

In 1755 an earthquake devastated the city of Lisbon and killed 10,000 to 15,000 people. Some claimed that a just god had punished the city for its sinful ways. Others (Voltaire, for example) assailed this sort of piety, insisting that while god may exist, he certainly does not bring about the best for humanity. Still others (Rousseau, for example) argued that the earthquake should be viewed as a natural event, as a misfortune. It had disastrous results, he added, because people had built unsafe houses; to the extent that they should have been aware of the possibility of such natural events, the builders—and not god—had done the tenants of those houses an injustice.

In 1942 the Cocoanut Grove nightclub in Boston burned to the ground and almost 500 people died. Many human actions, some negligent, contributed to the disaster. A busboy had carelessly dropped a match into an artificial plant; but that might not have been fatal had the club's seats not been covered in a synthetic fabric that gave off asphyxiating fumes in the fire; but that synthetic fabric had been used without disaster in many other nightclubs; but in the Cocoanut Grove too many exits were locked, and suffocating patrons were unable to escape. There were also other safety violations, none out of the ordinary. Who was to blame?

Was the Lisbon earthquake injustice or misfortune? Was it injustice or misfortune, or a complex combination of both, that so many small human errors combined to produce the calamity in Boston? Judith Shklar's new book confronts these cases, and others like them. It asks how we may sort out injustice from misfortune, and looks skeptically at the human tendency to seek a single "scapegoat," divine or human, for any disaster that befalls. In real life, Shklar persuasively argues, matters are rarely so clear. Many cases of human suffering for which we seek to assign blame are due to misfortune, and cannot be imputed to any human agency. Many disasters that look like simple misfortune, on the other hand, turn out to contain elements of human injustice—especially of the sort that Shklar calls "passive injustice," that is negligence, a culpable refusal to get involved, a blameworthy lack of foresight. Thus the citizens of Lisbon, as Rousseau argued, were victims of injustice as well as misfortune, to the extent that their buildings should indeed have been better fortified. And the patrons of the Cocoanut Grove indeed suffered some injustice at the hands of the busboy, the owner, and negligent city officials, though the disaster that took place seems to have been vastly greater than the wrongdoing that occasioned it.

Written vigorously, with many vivid examples from history and literature, Shklar's book engages the reader in a provocative meditation about the meaning and the scope of human injustice—its varieties, its relation both to human psychology and to social and economic inequality. Shklar begins her opening chapter with the observation, reminiscent of her thinking in her previous book *Ordinary Vices*, that philosophers tend to focus on the analysis of lofty normative notions such as justice and forget the equally important task of saying what *in*justice is. Moreover, the mainstream philosophical tradition of writing about justice—what Shklar, using Aristotle and Mill as central cases, calls "the normal model"—has made an even greater error: focusing on the structure of institutions rather than on the roots of justice and injustice in the personality, these philosophers have falsely implied that just institutions are all we need in order to eradicate injustice. Plato, Augustine, and Montaigne saw more profoundly. Rebelling against the "normal model" (here chronology becomes blurred, since no example of the "normal model" prior to Aristotle is mentioned), these dissident thinkers, whom Shklar calls the "skeptics," saw the need to begin with a deeper understanding of human motivation, of the causes of injustice in the personality. Only with such a foundation can the institutional questions be resolved.

After a brief account of the views of these "skeptics," Shklar turns to the theme that has been announced as the book's central one from its opening paragraphs: the complexity of the intertwining of misfortune and injustice in human affairs. She argues, in support of Rousseau's approach to incidents like the Lisbon disaster, that human injustice lies in the background of many apparent misfortunes. Here Shklar focuses on the "passive injustice" that avoids the obligations of concern and foresight that are, she argues, part of any reasonable conception of citizenship. Following Cicero, she writes eloquently of "the ills we cause by simply letting matters that are not our immediate concern take their course." Somewhat oddly, she claims that "passive injustice is a strictly civic notion"—though surely such failures to acknowledge the claims of others on our attention and love occur also, and all too often, in private life.

The concept of "passive injustice" is a valuable one, but Shklar says little about its scope. To which pieces of the complex causal chains that lead to disasters does "passive injustice" pertain? If A murders B with a gun that A would likely not have acquired if A's state had enacted strong gun control legislation, who is "passively" at fault here? The state legislature? The National Rifle Association? All the many citizens who did not campaign for gun control legislation? The American system of government as a whole, which frequently grants unusual power to lobbies like the NRA? And could it ever turn out that the very features of a system that permit certain injustices to occur (its failures, say, to interfere with certain private activities of citizens) are intrinsically linked to some of the benefits it contributes to human life? One wishes that Shklar had elaborated on such questions.

Shklar's central chapter is concerned with the difficulty of distinguishing misfortune from injustice. Her argument is complicated, and I shall return to some of the problems it poses. But, speaking of the Lisbon earthquake, the Cocoanut Grove fire, and a number of other grim and fascinating cases from history and literature (including the prosecution of Mr. Pickwick by Mrs. Bardell, in which Dickens allows only the reader to see the mischances that have led to the impression, on almost everyone's part, that injustice has occurred), Shklar criticizes the tendency to look for a scapegoat for every disaster. Many events are simply mischance. We must accept this, she insists, even though to accept it is to acknowledge our own powerlessness, our relative insignificance in nature. She seems to reject appeals to providence

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and to "fate" as inaccurate anthropomorphizings of nature.

Still, it is also valuable to look, with Rousseau, for elements of wrongdoing within misfortune; only in this way will we bring to light, and correct, the injustices that lie concealed, as contributory causes, behind many apparently natural calamities. Shklar makes the interesting point that whether a natural accident is or is not a misfortune for somebody depends a good deal on social circumstances that are often within our power to alter. Thus, being born female rather than male is often a misfortune for individuals, but it is so only on account of background conditions of injustice. Rather than thanking God each day that one was not born a woman (a prayer that Orthodox Jews recite every morning to this day), such males, Shklar wryly observes, could well get to work and change the conditions that make femaleness a condition that one is thankful not to have.

Shklar argues, about the way in which citizens develop a sense of injustice, that we cannot understand "the full moral and political meaning of the sense of injustice" without turning "to democratic political theory and its greatest representative, Rousseau." Following Rousseau, she makes a new criticism of the "normal model" of philosophizing about justice: that it fails to grasp the fact that social inequality, and human beings' more or less instinctive resentment of it, is the real origin of the sense of injustice that lies at the heart of our moral life. She seems to believe that a democratic political theory needs to be grounded in the belief that "many of our expectations are rooted in nature, not in culture." And she then claims that democracy provides the conditions in which the individual's natural sense of personal dignity will flourish.

Shklar concludes with an examination of a variety of injustices caused by unequal treatment in our own society—racism, sexism, and political policies of various sorts. Here she casually makes some highly controversial empirical claims about the American sense of justice—for example, that "training for greater opportunities is approved since it opens doors to individuals, but across the board redistributive welfare is unpopular." This large and vague claim, left unexplored, is not much help. Few Americans oppose some form of graduated income tax; the capital gains tax is a subject of intense controversy; and so forth. And why should we think, in any case, that a democratic theory of social justice must be based on what American citizens say unreflectively when they are polled about their preferences? This is a highly dubious basis for a philosophical conclusion about social welfare programs.

Similarly, Shklar dismisses "paternalism" as "unjust and bound to arouse a sense of injustice." But she says far too little about the varieties of paternalistic government action. Does she oppose mandatory seatbelt laws? Safety regulations for children's toys? Federal guidelines for the testing and marketing of new drugs? Gun control laws? Nor does she go into any detail concerning the sort of philosophical argument that she would advance for the conclusion that all paternalism is unjust. The reader is not given a principled basis for working out what her attitude on these concrete cases would likely be, and why. Shklar's version of democratic justice, her final call for the continuous participation of citizens striving for continuous "mutual accommodation," remains promising but underdescribed.

Actually, the problem is worse. I wonder whether Shklar could describe this positive norm further without confronting a tension in her position. For she suggests, on the one hand, that "passive injustice" is a vice especially nourished in liberal democratic societies, where each person is encouraged to go his or

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her own way, attending all too little to the good of the whole group, even when such attention would lead to life-saving actions and policies; and she insists, on the other hand, that all paternalism is unjust. But how, exactly, are private citizens to watch over the lives and health of their fellow citizens, if not through forms of paternalistic legislation that in some ways limit the operations of private enterprise and private individuals, in order to protect the health and safety of all?

The building codes that protected the citizens of San Francisco last year, that made their situation infinitely more secure than that of the citizens of Lisbon, are paternalistic. They limit the freedom of builders to build as they like, of gullible tenants and buyers to choose improperly built dwellings. In this sense, builders and buyers in a less legally inhibited city like New York have far more freedom. But if an earthquake were to devastate New York, wouldn't Shklar indict those same builders, and the government and citizens who failed to restrain them, for "passive injustice"? Isn't a certain type of paternalistic legislation, in other words, a necessary condition of justice, as Shklar sees it? She needs to tell us more about this, saying how far the responsibility for the protection of citizens extends, which individuals and agencies bear that responsibility, and what remedies limiting individual freedoms will be just.

Despite the vigor of Shklar's writing, the range of her references, and the importance of the questions she raises, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that her central ideas are articulated in terms of a contradictory allegiance. Her first chapter announces that Plato has the key to the problem of injustice: namely, that its roots are in the bad desires and the ignorance of the soul. The precise nature of Shklar's debt to Plato is far from clear, since she states, oddly, that the *Republic* offers no account of "what justice is," although most readers of that work find in it not only a definition of justice, but an elaborate account of its formation. (She appeals for illumination also to Augustine's very different account of the soul's defects, leaving the reader unclear about her intellectual preference.) It is clear, at least, that she applauds Plato for turning from an account of institutions to an account of the soul and the nature of its knowledge, and for holding that the removal of certain cognitive deficiencies in the soul is necessary and (if completely accomplished) sufficient for the removal of injustice.

But Plato's vision is notoriously and profoundly hostile to democracy. He argues, in fact, that complete justice can be realized only in a few specially endowed souls, that the best society is the one in which the rule belongs only to these people. In Shklar's final chapter, by contrast, she turns to Rousseau as her source, praising his democratic analysis of injustice as having its roots in social and political inequalities. She seems to approve of the program that Rousseau designed for his pupil Emile's education, with its strong emphasis on pity for the suffering of "all sentient creatures"—a sentiment that was strictly avoided in Plato's ideal city. Perhaps there is a way of reconciling the ideas that Shklar derives from two such radically opposed thinkers, but she makes no effort to tell the reader how this may be done. Worse still, there is no evidence that she herself has noticed the tension in her account.

Her sweeping criticism of the mainstream philosophical tradition of writing about justice, moreover, remains unclear and unconvincing. Shklar's objection to the "normal model" of inquiry—it is exemplified in her account by Aristotle and Mill, but the description could fit many other theorists as well, including some, such as Rawls, who are highly influential on the contemporary scene—is that these theorists define justice in terms of distributive policies and the structure of institutions. In so doing, Shklar argues, they neglect the motivational forces that make for injustice in the soul of the individual human being. She chides this tradition for its "false intellectual self-assurance," and for failing "to fulfill its own promise to eliminate injustice." This failure, according to her, is due to the fact that such theories make the silly mistake of thinking that good laws and good institutions suffice to produce just people, which is clearly not the case.

Before one hastily dismisses so many difficult and remarkable philosophers, however, one had better be sure that they really stand convicted of the mistake in question, and that the mistake is indeed a fatal one. Aristotle does give an elaborate account of distributive justice; and in the *Politics* he says a lot about the justice of institutions. But elsewhere in his work he devotes a great deal of attention to questions of moral education, describing the nature of the child's desires, emotions, and affiliations, and the role of family, personal friendship, and the civic sphere in the production of virtue and practical wisdom. (His two accounts are linked, moreover, in that support for moral education is one of the central tasks of political institutions.)

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Mill was well aware that there might be widespread injustice even in a country with reasonably decent political institutions, on account of the pernicious influence of prejudice and convention. *The Subjection of Women* was a passionate account of precisely such a problem. And Rawls (an implicit target of Shklar's assault) clearly separates the question "What are the principles of justice?" from the question "How is a sense of justice developed in citizens?" (To the latter question he devoted an especially fascinating and little-studied section of *A Theory of Justice*.) So I do not see that the philosophical tradition is guilty of the error for which Shklar indicts it. I think, rather, that her own tendency to conflate the task of defining justice with the task of specifying an education for justice has led her to neglect the psychological and educational elements of the philosophical tradition that she berates.

At most, Shklar has a legitimate grievance against her profession. Perhaps her criticism is the result of an excessive immersion in the literature of political theory. For it is all too frequently true that political theorists working in political science departments discuss the structure of institutions without undertaking a deeper scrutiny of human motivation, or of the conditions of knowledge. Courses in such departments too often encourage students to suppose that they could understand the political and institutional thought of Aristotle without caring about epistemological or psychological or even ethical questions. (Plato is better off: it would require deliberate thought and extravagant effort to design a program of reading in the *Republic* that would separate political and institutional questions from psychological and epistemological questions.) It is not really fair, though, to blame Aristotle for not foreseeing the defects of the modern curriculum. He ran his own school differently.

And in fact Shklar herself displays, throughout this book, precisely the indifference to the soul and to matters of epistemology that she criticizes in others. She tells us that Plato and Augustine were on the right track, but she never describes or defends her own account of human motivation. She never even tells us whether it seems more promising to search for the origin of injustice in ignorance, or in some combination of ignorance with unruly bodily appetite, or in some kind of original sin of the will. And where knowledge is concerned, she does not even inform the reader about her own understanding of Plato's account of knowledge—a crucial task, given the obscurity of Plato's text and the abundance of incompatible interpretations—much less about how knowledge is supposed to defeat injustice in Plato's city. And still less does she offer an analysis and an account of her own.

Yet the book's most crippling problem is more fundamental, more conceptual. Shklar's central thesis about misfortune and injustice is articulated in three different forms. Her book contains, as if they are a single thesis, three different theses: first, that it is not possible to draw a clear general distinction between misfortune and injustice; second, that it is not possible to decide, concerning many actual complex events, whether they are best described as misfortune or injustice (or some definitely specifiable combination of the two); and third, that many complex events contain a complicated interweaving of misfortune and injustice, such that it is possible, but very difficult, to sort these elements out correctly.

Shklar asserts all these claims at different times. The problem is that an analysis of a calamity in Shklar's third way, that is, taking apart a complex case into its components of misfortune and injustice, and criticizing other ways of doing this as wrong, is clearly incompatible with analyzing it in her first way: the difficult job of sorting out makes sense only if there is a relatively clear and stable and general distinction available to which one may appeal.

In fact, Shklar confidently uses such an intuitive distinction throughout the book, although she gives no explicit account of it. She evidently believes that it is a necessary, and perhaps a sufficient, condition of an event's being an injustice rather than a misfortune that both (*a*) the event damages the interests of some person or persons and (*b*) the event is caused by some blameworthy action of a responsible agent (whether deliberately "ill-intentioned" or culpably neglectful). The hard part about such a distinction is refining that distinction further to apply in a complex case where there are multiple responsibilities, as in the Cocoanut Grove fire, or a case of interaction between misfortune and agency, as in the Lisbon earthquake. Had Shklar been less unjustifiably pessimistic about clear conceptual distinctions, she might have gone further to clarify this one—telling us, for example, how far she takes an agent to be morally responsible for a disaster that (on account of an admixture of misfortune) seems vastly to exceed the scope of his or her blameworthy agency; how exactly to draw the delicate distinction between "active" and "passive" injustice; whether indeed that distinction

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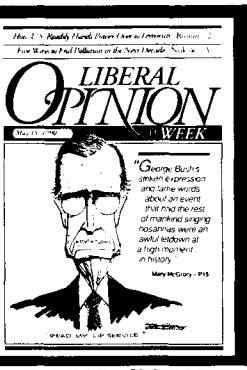

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can be adequately drawn, or whether it will prove as elusive as the distinction between "killing" and "letting die" has proved to be in medical ethics; and so forth.

The hard philosophical questions are, instead, merely waved away, and philosophers are scolded for having pursued them. Nor does Shklar argue successfully for her second thesis, that it is not possible to decide, concerning complicated events, between misfortune and injustice—which in any case also would not be compatible with her third thesis concerning the same range of cases. Sometimes she supports her argument with general claims of a relativistic nature, as when she says that a certain case seems like misfortune to some but like injustice to others. But she never rules out an analysis of such cases in terms of her third thesis. It *is* possible, but it *is* difficult, to sort these things out, and we are not always in an epistemological position to do so. In some instances, it may take centuries to tell who was right.

It seems to be Shklar's most frequently endorsed position—it is certainly her most convincing one—that there is a best answer in each case, and that it is very important to search for it. And this being so, it is most unfortunate that she muddies the issue by asserting that "it is the argument of this book that no such line can be drawn in general or abstractly," and even that it would be more "rational" to stop drawing such distinctions. Such remarks show that the conceptual confusion is not a superficial one, but lies at the heart of her argument. Perhaps her failure to state her position clearly for the reader is owed to the book's origin as a series of lectures; it retains a brisk and chatty lecturing style. But I am afraid that one must also attribute it to an impatience with the requirements of philosophical inquiry.

The role of misfortune or luck in human life, and the complex relationships that obtain between luck and justice, have not always been very fully investigated by philosophers writing about justice. Here Shklar has a legitimate criticism, though not against Aristotle, who is one of the most subtle among the thinkers who have written on this topic. To some extent, the neglect of the topic results from the attraction of much of the Western philosophical tradition to the view (developed in different ways by thinkers as diverse as Plato, the Stoics, Spinoza, and Kant) that the good person cannot be harmed, that the person with a just or virtuous character cannot suffer seriously from either misfortune or the injustices of others. Still less would it be possible for luck or the injustice of others to cause such a person to commit an unjust act. Shklar's examples, however, show good people suffering misfortune at the hands of the world, and injustice at the hands of their fellow human beings, in ways that do seem to impair the quality of the lives they lead in serious and central ways, enslaving them, subjecting them to disease or torture, or even just condescension and ridicule—and, at the outer limit, killing them before they have lived a full life.

As Aristotle remarks, nobody would judge that a good person who is being tortured is living a completely good human life, unless one was "defending a philosophical position at all costs." Luck may impede not only feelings of happiness or satisfaction, but also the pursuit of an ethical end. For who can perform just or generous actions while being tortured? And if one dies prematurely, this diminishes not only one's own life, but also the good that one may do for the world. But if this is so, then isn't the person who manages to act justly over a complete life a lucky person? And to what extent should we praise this person, given that the opportunity to act in a commendable way was bestowed by chance, and not by her own efforts alone?

Even more problematic is the fact that luck sometimes seems to force good people to choose an unjust action, by placing them in dilemmas in which all the available choices involve serious moral failure or a violation of obligations. Such dilemmas have been, not surprisingly, a central focus of reflection in more than one tradition. Consider the case of Agamemnon, forced to choose between killing his own daughter and an impiety that would result in the death of all his troops. Or consider the dilemma of Arjuna in the *Mahabharata*, confronted with the choice between abandoning his family duty (allowing the defeat and death of his side) and killing his close relatives. Agamemnon and Arjuna have arrived in these dilemmas through bad luck, not through any fault of their own; and yet it appears that they will not get out of them without committing an injustice.

If one approaches such dilemmas with one's mind already made up that the universe is just, or that the good can do no wrong, one will devise some way to blunt their tragic force. Many philosophers, in both non-Western and Western traditions, have found ingenious ways of doing this. I confess that most of their ingenuity seems to me sophistical—a way of denying or misdescribing the problem, rather than solving it. As a reader profoundly moved by Arjuna's compelling description of his tragic predicament, I own to feeling disappointment and irritation when Krishna begins to speak, telling him, in effect, that there really is no problem. I feel the same irritation when Socrates announces to Euthyphro that the gods agree about what is just; and when Aquinas instructs that a conflict of obligations produces an intolerable logical inconsistency; and when Kant asserts that a conflict of duties is always only an apparent conflict. If, on the other hand, one grants from the start that human beings are vulnerable and relatively powerless in a universe that is not just or benign, one will be likely to grant that the complicity between misfortune and injustice in human life can be deep and disturbing, and that the life of a just person can sometimes be characterized by tragedy.

At the limit, prolonged misfortune, or prolonged injustice at the hands of others, can sometimes erode the sense of justice itself, undercutting the motives, the desires, and the expectations of a person who, in better circumstances, might have remained just. For if a just character is formed (as Shklar says, and I agree) by the moral education that is received in one's family and one's society, then misfortune or injustice can step in to prevent justice from developing. And even if a good character is likely to stand firm in adversity, a good character may not be limitlessly firm. Misfortunes sufficiently deep and sufficiently long can corrupt it, replacing love and trust with cynicism and suspiciousness, openness with furtiveness, evenhandedness with desperate selfishness.

Plato's Thrasymachus cynically said of justice that it is "a very noble kind of naïveté," meaning that it requires a trust in other people who are not really trustworthy. What he said is true: being just does require attitudes of trust that misfortune can in some circumstances remove. This being the case, it appears that just institutions, and more generally a just society, are still necessary for personal justice, even if they are not sufficient for it; for, as Thrasymachus reasonably asks, how can we ask people to have confidence in that which does not merit their confidence, to love what shows callous disregard for them?

Such are the complex issues about luck and justice opened up by Shklar's provocative account. She seems to reject any notion of divine providence, and she seems to believe that the nonhuman forces affecting human life are best seen as morally neutral. She presents human beings as vulnerable and needy, rather than as beneficiaries of a

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divine plan. But then one would like to know how she deals with issues of luck, of the kind that I have sketched—issues that arise naturally and urgently when one removes providence from the scene. One would like to know what picture of virtue, of agency, of praise and blame, of moral education, will emerge. But a deeper psychological and ethical inquiry is not even attempted in Shklar's book, despite its insistence on the importance of psychological and ethical inquiry. She ridicules and scolds previous thinkers, but her account of justice, even on its own terms, is incomplete.

MARTHA NUSSBAUM is University Professor and Professor of Philosophy, Classics, and Comparative Literature at Brown University. She is the author of *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford University Press).

The Beginning of the End

BY DONALD L. HOROWITZ

South Africa: Diary of Troubled Times
by Nomavenda Mathiane
(Freedom House, 189 pp., $23.95, $18.95 paper)

The Mind of South Africa
by Allister Sparks
(Knopf, 424 pp., $24.95)

Higher Than Hope:
The Authorized Biography of Nelson Mandela
by Fatima Meer
(Harper Collins, 464 pp., $19.95)

When members of the Congressional Black Caucus decided not to meet with F. W. de Klerk during his visit to Washington in September, they reminded us that South Africa is an American issue. After all, the African National Congress had been meeting with de Klerk and members of his government in an atmosphere of cordiality, even chumminess, for many months. De Klerk's approval rating among black South Africans has soared since his government legalized the ANC and released Nelson Mandela from prison. The South African president was cheered when he visited Soweto a couple of months ago. And, in the expectation that significant black support is not beyond his reach, de Klerk proposed that his National Party open its membership rolls to all, and the party has now agreed. No doubt perceptions in Washington trail developments in South Africa, but the history of race relations in the United States also guarantees that Americans will have their own, distinctive views of South Africa for a long time to come.

American experience assures a special fixation on, and repugnance at, apartheid. As long as apartheid was firmly in place, practically nothing else in South Africa could matter for Americans, because apartheid was unreconstructed, unrepentant racial segregation, discrimination, and inequality. Nor could anyone doubt just how much inequality. In the 1980s the South African government was spending about five times as much per pupil on white as on African education. Although relative black earnings increased dramatically through the 1970s and 1980s, by 1986 whites still earned almost three-and-a-half times as much as Africans per capita. The Group Areas Act prevented people from living or owning any property where they wished, and the Separate Amenities Act provided for racial segregation of what we would call public accommodations—precisely the sort of segregation that Congress outlawed in 1964. And black South Africans remain voteless to this day.

So long as these were the facts, the complications of the South African

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story were decidedly secondary. Ethnic and political pluralism among African groups, the history of Afrikaner nationalism, the ANC's apparent commitment to an unproductive form of socialism, the problem of securing democracy in a future, inclusive South Africa—all these were red herrings whose invocation could only delay necessary change. Now, however, the wheel is turning.

For about a decade, Afrikaner elites, deeply embarrassed by apartheid, have been undergoing some fundamental changes in thought. De Klerk's conversion followed many others'. Besides showing the power of black discontent, the township protests of the mid-1980s gave these Afrikaners a sense of urgency. De Klerk has now committed the government to universal suffrage. The Separate Amenities Act and nearly every other piece of statutory apartheid are gone or on the way out. Even the cherished Group Areas Act will be repealed. For most of the past year, South Africans of all communities have been debating what the postapartheid future ought to look like. All of the issues that took a back seat to apartheid have come to the fore.

Americans, too, now seem ready for a more complex and future-oriented story of South Africa. The Zulu-Xhosa violence of last summer alerted them to the problem of ethnic conflict. Universal suffrage has raised the question of minority rights, for whites and also for the other minorities, so-called Coloureds and Indians. The ANC's close ties to, and overlapping membership with, the South African Communist Party—a party slow to embrace glasnost—have triggered concern about whether South Africa might drift from one undemocratic regime to another. The differences between the ANC and its rivals for black support, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), and the Zulu-based Inkatha of Mangosuthu Buthelezi, have become clearer to outsiders. A new South Africa, one that is more than a projection of European and North American guilt, is emerging, but it is by no means in focus.

South Africa is a deeply divided society. If there were no substantial white, "Coloured," or Indian population, ethnic pluralism among the African population would still provide as much basis for division as exists in Kenya, Uganda, or Angola, which is quite a lot indeed. The long-standing European presence and the harshness of racial exclusion have actually softened differences among the African groups, but those differences are not dead. They are particularly sharp between Zulu in Natal province, many of whom support an Inkatha that emphasizes the former glory of the Zulu kingdom, and Xhosa, who are disproportionately represented in the ANC leadership.

Add to this mix a white population going back to 1652 (when the Dutch East India Company established a base at the Cape), a "Coloured" population usually referred to as "mixed" but composed of several strands that are not wholly mixed, and the small Indian minority. (Together, these racial minorities constitute more than a quarter of the total population.) Then South Africa becomes a powerfully plural society. All around Asia and Africa, democracy has been difficult to establish in such societies. It will not be easy in South Africa either.

On top of this diversity of origins sits an array of incompatible ideas. Apartheid was a regime of racial subordination backed by the might of the modern state. It generated strongly held ideologies that underlay differences among the ANC, PAC, AZAPO, and Inkatha. The ANC stands for a "non-racial society" (about which more presently); the PAC, for an African nationalism that puts the 14 percent white population in the status of colonial "settlers"; AZAPO, for Black Consciousness; Inkatha, (implicitly) for Zulu nationalism and (explicitly) for a multiracial state that accommodates, among others, the interests of whites. Heavily influenced by Marxist paradigms, the PAC and AZAPO are decidedly skeptical of multiparty democracy. Even apart from the ANC-Inkatha feud, these ideologies and organizational affiliations have taken an incalculable toll in lives in the last five years.

Once the process of change opens up, as it now has, the white-black ideological polarity also has to be considered. Leave aside the existence of a growing, armed white right wing that rejects political compromise across racial lines. Just consider the starting positions of the ANC and the National Party.

For the ANC, non-racialism does not mean multiracialism. The opposition has had more than enough of racial classifications, and so it refuses to take explicit account of race or of African ethnicity. The ANC demands a non-racial democracy based on universal suffrage.

At the outset the National Party had an opposite position. The "nation" in the adjective "National" was originally the Afrikaner nation, an amalgam of Dutch, French Huguenot, and German strands that by 1795 or so had been completely cut off from Europe and produced "white Africans." The Afrikaners have a long history of fighting Dutch colonial

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rule, then British colonial rule, and finally economic and political subordination to the English-speaking 40 percent of the white population. The National Party, which came to power in 1948, is known for apartheid, but its first victory was against the English-speaking whites.

In recent years the Afrikaner-English cleavage has been closing, and the Nationalists had until lately been speaking of white interests rather than Afrikaner interests. They advocated minority protection in a future South Africa through the medium of constitutionally entrenched group rights. Such devices are not unprecedented in multiracial or multiethnic democracies, but they are anathema to the ANC, and it is doubtful that formally recognized group rights would actually furnish worthwhile protection for the minorities.

What is certain is that undifferentiated majority rule, based on the pretense that minorities are either creations of the oppressive regime that is to be transcended or mere figments of the imagination that are best ignored, will produce undemocratic majority domination of the sort that is common in divided societies. This is exactly the domination of which Catholics complain in Northern Ireland and Tamils complain in Sri Lanka. The results are there for all to see. Still, dedication to a non-racial society—with no concessions to its plural character—is an article of faith among much of the opposition, comparable to the dedication to a classless society among socialists. This fact signifies how great the obstacles are to durable constitutional arrangements, no matter how great the goodwill.

These are only formal obstacles, however, deriving from starting positions that will be modified along the way. (The Nationalists already appear to have retreated from their insistence on group-based protections.) The obstacles on the ground are even greater. Few people have written of these more cogently than Nomavenda Mathiane. Assistant editor of the South African magazine *Frontline*, Mathiane lives in Soweto. She is inclined toward Black Consciousness, according to her publisher, but her allegiance is to the anti-apartheid struggle in general.

Despite commitment to a cause, Mathiane's reason does not desert her. Her *Diary* consists of articles written from 1985 to 1988, the height of protest in black townships. This was the time when residents faced down the armored police and military vehicles that rolled through the townships. In one disturbing piece after another, Mathiane chronicles the eventual takeover of the townships by ex-student "comrades," who drafted teenagers to swell their ranks, burned down the family houses of those who refused, enforced rent boycotts with "necklaces" (gasoline-filled tires that burn victims to death), and generally bullied the adults around them.

In the name of the struggle, cars were stolen from a blind people's center in Soweto, parents were told by children how to raise their own children, schooling came to a halt. As Mathiane describes it, there was a general shift from fear of the apartheid system to fear of each other. During the protests, informally organized street committees reported to the Soweto Civic Association, aligned with the United Democratic Front, which in turn was aligned with the ANC. The street committees assumed extensive powers. At their best, they were able to limit criminal activity, but they also attempted to mobilize all residents, whatever their preference, on behalf of the UDF. For more than a decade, Soweto had a strong Black Consciousness presence, so Mathiane is understandably upset by these tactics. In 1986-87, there was serious fighting in Soweto between AZAPO and the UDF. In all of this, Soweto was not different from other South African townships, where one organization or another ran its rivals out so it could rule alone. This is a tendency that does not bode well for multiparty competition.

Mathiane's account of grass-roots organization is not entirely bleak, however. One neighborhood finally revolted against the "comrades," demanded a secret ballot, and elected an adult-majority committee that broke the hold of the teenagers. Still, there is an uneducated half-generation of comrades in the townships. They are not inclined to democratic political participation, and their motto is not "live and let live."

It should not be surprising that an oppressive regime should produce undemocratic currents among those who oppose it, and it should not be forgotten that the township protests of the 1980s marked the beginning of the end of apartheid. Undemocratic currents exist in the ANC, but it is most uncertain that they will prevail. Fatima Meer's biography of Mandela might have shed light on this issue, but it is, as described in the subtitle, "authorized." It is, in fact, very authorized. Mandela's own reflections, many solicited by the author, are sprinkled through the text.

Meer, a survey researcher of Indian origin based at the University of Natal in Durban, is a longtime ANC supporter, close to Mandela. Banned three times under South African security laws, Meer may be ideologically committed to the

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ANC's version of the struggle, but she is capable of detachment: in *Resistance in the Townships*, a volume that she edited in 1989, she reported that the unrest of the mid-1980s had produced around Durban "a marked shift toward conservatism on the part of Coloured and particularly Indian peoples"—not exactly music to the ears of the resistance. The Mandela biography, however, provides little new insight into a mostly familiar story.

Mandela's early life is covered spottily. A member of the royal house of the Thembu, a subgroup of the Xhosa-speaking people, Mandela was inspired by myths about a benign—and in its way democratic—precolonial Thembu past, a past easy to contrast with the harsh reality of white rule. Mandela's political education began as a young student in Johannesburg in the 1940s. There he encountered many of his future ANC associates, most notably Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo. Eventually he married a cousin of Sisulu's. In Johannesburg, he also met people of other races, many of them associated with the South African Communist Party, and he moved, Meer tells us, from African exclusivism to "international humanism."

Mandela joined the ANC Youth League, which was in the process of rebelling against the genteel politics of the parent organization. Like other Youth Leaguers, Mandela aimed to put the ANC "in touch with the masses." The Youth League also wanted to free the ANC of its dependence on the leadership of Communists, who had by then a first foothold in the Congress. In those years, the Youth League argued that South Africa belonged exclusively to Africans. By the early 1950s the Youth League had more or less taken over the ANC. Mandela's "antagonism against foreigners"—that is, South African whites and Indians—having "subsided," he became an ANC deputy president. From then on, he fought the Africanists, who advocated racial exclusiveness within the organization, until they split off to form the Pan Africanist Congress.

Laid out in this straightforward way, this well-worn material still tells us something about the movement, about Mandela, about South African society. Most obvious is the oscillation between socialist and nationalist formulations. Was apartheid a form of capitalist oppression, so that the correct response was at once revolutionary and racially inclusive? Or was it the harshest form of racial oppression, demanding a specifically African reaction? The ANC and Mandela seemed to go in every direction on these questions.

At his sabotage trial in 1962, Mandela played down the socialism of the movement, emphasizing instead "freedom and fulfillment for the African people in their own land." In its Freedom Charter of 1955, on the other hand, the ANC had seemed to depict South Africa as a multinational (or at least a multiracial) state, in which racial minorities would have recognized rights—a position rejected by the PAC and later abandoned by the ANC itself. Yet the socialism of the movement recurs—in the continued ties to the SACP, in the picture of Lenin that adorned Mandela's study, in the myth of a precolonial classless society that pervaded Mandela's thought, and in ANC demands for nationalization of the economy. Where the ANC will come out on these questions is still uncertain.

About Mandela's early dedication to the cause there can be no doubt. Winnie Mandela's own memoir, published in 1984, has described his long periods away, his unannounced returns, and the unspoken understanding that the movement came first. Meer puts us in mind of a few further details, including Mandela's distance from his first wife and the dissolution of their marriage. After his marriage to Winnie in 1958, Meer describes Mandela's hosting of a meeting to plot against Winnie's father. Her father had joined forces with some Xhosa leaders aligned with the government and had escaped an attack on him in his own home. In Meer's book, Winnie recounts that she was instructed to prepare dinner for ten people and was not told what they were discussing. Later it was rumored that she had harbored people plotting her father's death. Consoling his wife after the meeting, Mandela assured her that divided loyalties were part and parcel of the struggle. Meer lets it go at that.

If personalities alone were ultimately to determine events in South Africa, these accounts would establish Mandela as a man single-mindedly devoted to the cause. But this much one could have guessed about a man with the courage to endure twenty-seven years in prison. Understandably, there is little in the biography about the future, though there are one or two interesting asides. Meer notes that, during an African tour to gain financial support for the ANC, Mandela found Kwame Nkrumah "a binding force and enormously popular." This was 1962, years after Nkrumah had turned Ghana into a fear-driven police state. That the same Mandela whose grandson is named Qaddafi traveled recently to Libya to collect a Qaddafi Human Rights Prize inevitably raises questions about the ANC's commitment to a tolerant, multiparty democracy.

How deep support for liberal democracy runs in the ANC is a nice question. The pronouncements of some ANC leaders on "people's democracy" have sometimes been chilling. Support for democracy is certainly less deep in the PAC and AZAPO. And why should it be deep? What practice of democracy has there been for Africans in South Africa? The absence of firm democratic commitments does not mean that such commitments will not eventually be forthcoming, but it does mean that they cannot be taken for grant-

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Suddenly, Buffalo was the center.
And Charles was the center of Buffalo.
I was there maybe a year after Charles,
but anywhere you were it was like people
were saying, "Charles." So he was an influence
on me, indirect, you could say, but strong.
That was when I got heavy into ampersands.
God, I still love those little suckers!
I could talk to you for an hour about them!"

He set the empty tankard down. He sighed.
"I haven't been influenced since.
I mean, not seriously anyway.
Maybe *you* can tell me, kid.
Are the influences what they used to be?
And just who are the influences today?"

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ed. Like a good many conspiratorial opposition organizations in oppressive societies (including the Bolsheviks), the ANC has presumably learned some good lessons about how politics can be the art of domination.

There is another theme that does not quite make it to the surface in Meer's account but is contained in Mandela's own words. Early on, Mandela professed to dreams of restoring at least some of the precolonial Xhosa ethos. Winnie comes from a chiefly family of another Xhosa subgroup, the Pondo. Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, and a good many other ANC leaders are also Xhosa. The Xhosa had the longest encounters with the Europeans, having fought nine wars against whites in the nineteenth century. In her account, Winnie Mandela affirms that she wants to pick up where those Xhosa left off in battle, and there is likely an unspoken undercurrent of Xhosa nationalism in some echelons of the ANC.

By contrast, Zulu are underrepresented in the ANC leadership, and a five-year ANC-Inkatha war has been waged in the largely Zulu province of Natal, where the ANC has historically been weakest. The standard opposition answer to ethnic issues in South Africa has been that a nonracial society also means a non-ethnic society, but the Zulu-Xhosa violence of 1990, now outside Natal, makes this increasingly an inadequate response in what is plainly a multiethnic society.

A more comprehensive book like Allister Sparks's *The Mind of South Africa* could provide some help in dealing with obvious issues of this kind. Could, but does not. Unburdened by Mathiane's realism, Sparks's account is a fairy tale. It begins with "Once upon a time," and it ends with "and they lived happily ever after." In between, it contains much competent factual narrative.

Once upon a time, before the white people came, there was a happy South Africa. There was the occasional cattle raid, especially among the more martial Nguni peoples (including Zulu and Xhosa), and of course peoples came into conflict as they moved southward toward the coast. But South Africa was tranquil before the whites arrived, largely because it lived by the concept of *ubuntu*, or humaneness. The concept is epitomized in the Xhosa proverb that translates as "people are people through other people," which is to say that sociality was highly valued. According to Sparks, democracy and the rule of law were present, and dissent against ruling chiefs was actually encouraged. To be sure, there was also a widespread belief in sorcery, which sometimes produced "acts of extreme cruelty, including torture." But these need to be seen in context, and the context includes a prescientific need to account for unexpected events.

Into this peaceful environment marched the white settlers. Although the Europeans in general were a disruptive force, the Afrikaners were the most disruptive. With "fallow" imaginations and "inert" minds, with their strong individualism and nationalism, the Boers had contempt for Africans "from the day they landed." Hungry for land, they displaced Africans from their territory. The Afrikaner flight from the British, which led them farther and farther into the interior, and into contact with more and more African groups, was not the constructive act of pioneers eager to harness the land, but of reactionaries seeking to escape the modern world. When, after the Boer War, the British ultimately left the country to them, the Afrikaners eventually produced apartheid, a system of exploitation that, in Sparks's view, remains essentially unchanged.

Despite 300 years of unhappy history, Sparks's South African future is bright. *Ubuntu* means that there will be reconciliation, not retribution. "Black rule" will somehow produce a "non-racial society" in accordance with ANC prescriptions. There has been some violence in the black townships, but that is inevitable; and in any case it is "transcended" by "a spirit of comradeship and purpose." The best thing that a racial minority can do is to "blend in with the community at large, to be as inconspicuous as possible and certainly to do nothing to draw resentful attention to itself." Black ethnic minorities likewise present no problem, since the ANC espouses "pan-tribalism." And on these terms everyone truly can live happily ever after.

This English-speaking South African journalist has done what he accuses the Afrikaner-dominated National Party of doing: he has worked with an "idealized past and an imagined future." Fortified with the pop anthropology of *ubuntu*, Sparks's book refuses to come to terms with any of the issues that South Africa itself is now attempting to confront. In large measure, his refusal to meet the hard tasks of accommodating majorities and minorities, of setting straight history that has gone wrong, of trying to produce fundamental change without sliding into violence, of constructing democracy, derives from Sparks's failure to approach either Africans or Afrikaners as people with human aspirations and failings. African society, says Sparks, is "warm and

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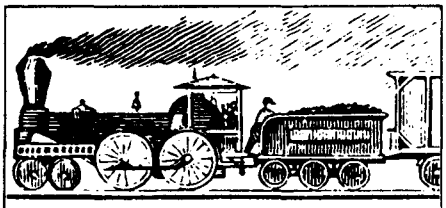

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spontaneous," not "uptight" or "self-indulgent" like white South Africa.

Without a trace of irony, Sparks can pass from racist white rule to non-racial black rule, never stopping to worry about democracy in a plural society. The question does not even occur to him. At one point, he does come close to dealing with the plight of Afrikaner nationalism, but then he goes off in high dudgeon to counsel Afrikaners that they need to share the country with others. No doubt this is the problem of a great many minority nationalisms, though Sparks seems utterly unaware of that. If he were so aware, would he be equally blasé in brushing off Eritrean nationalism or Kurdish nationalism or Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism or Ulster Catholic nationalism, all of them minority nationalisms? Would he ask how such nationalisms can be accommodated in a wider polity?

Leave aside such comparisons for the moment. In laying out the events of South African history after the European arrival, Sparks presents a more or less standard version of the tale. But often a complex history is depicted as being more clear-cut than it is. It is worth providing an example or two of a more subtle picture. Historians of the Afrikaners, most notably Hermann Giliomee, have uncovered the multifarious nature of relations between them and their African neighbors—relations that, until about 100 years ago, included a good deal of cooperation as well as conflict, uncertainty of status in some places, castelike subordination of Africans in others, and a rather late development of explicit notions of racial superiority. Likewise, sample surveys make clear that the "Coloured" community, rather than being pulled uniformly into the resistance camp, as Sparks suggests, is actually quite polarized. One of Meer's surveys in 1985 showed that 31 percent of Natal Coloureds chose then-President P. W. Botha as their preferred leader, almost three times the number who chose Mandela. Mere facts like these are beside the main point, which is that wishful thinking cannot produce a benign South Africa.

Sparks devotes several pages to arguing that there will be no vengeance against whites after they yield power. Never mind the vengeful song lyrics he quotes on other pages. *Ubuntu* will not permit vengeance. No doubt, Sparks adds, Africa has had its share of ethnic violence, but not anti-white bloodbaths. Why the focus on the possibility of widespread anti-white violence? In Natal, the deaths of blacks were already in the thousands as Sparks's book went to press, but one finds only the thinnest discussion of such violence, which is considered in terms of its instigation by the government. A South African government that Sparks generally depicts as blundering is credited with "shrewd manipulation" sufficient to turn "group against group in recurring sequences of black-on-black violence." African ethnic relations make no appearance in this account, except to deny them any conflict-producing significance. Yet far more dangerous, surely, than the risk of an anti-white bloodbath, which is probably remote, is the risk of uncontrolled ethnic conflict, culminating perhaps in Zulu separatism, unless accommodative institutions are put in place.

Sparks is not alone in refusing to think seriously about measures to conciliate South Africa's growing ethnic conflict. Since the apartheid regime used African ethnic differences as part of a strategy of divide and rule, the reasoning goes, recognition of ethnic differences must inevitably harm the interests of Africans. Hence the wishful expectation of a non-racial, non-ethnic society. Like many other countries, South Africa needs institutions that are appropriate for the divided society that it is. Partly because the legacy of apartheid discourages constructive thought on these questions, it may get something quite different.

Sparks is also not alone in believing that Afrikaner domination is sui generis, that it has nothing in common with domination arising out of conquest in places like Zanzibar, where Arabs long dominated Africans, or in Burundi, where a 14 percent Tutsi minority practices a different version of apartheid and occasional genocide against the Hutu majority. He cannot bring himself to speak in terms of common human propensities, which is the only way to make sense of racial and ethnic domination.

South African politicians, by contrast, have been discovering each other's attractions and foibles as they wrestle against the odds to plan for a future South Africa. Mathiane recounts fascinating discussions with township people about the meaning of freedom in South Africa. "To some," she says, "freedom means the turning of the tables where the black man will be on top of the white man." But for most, beyond the obvious end of restrictions, there is "a curtain. People know there is something terribly wrong about the present system, but what shape a different one will take is something they cannot explain, at least in words." And that is how it should be. All the struggles are not over when *the* struggle is over.

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If a new South Africa is not yet in focus, that is because it is inherently difficult to design an inclusive polity. Majority rule could easily mean a form of black rule that excludes the interests of all the racial minorities, or that also excludes black minorities, particularly the Zulu; in that case minorities will indeed have to keep their heads down and remain inconspicuous. Or majority rule could mean what democratic theory suggests that it means—something more fluid, more inclusive, and in the end more liberating. But that goal is assuredly difficult to achieve, and it is not likely to be achieved without acknowledging the problem.

Well over a century ago, Mill pronounced that democracy is "next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities." A number of theorists of plural societies in the contemporary period agree, and they are not wholly without evidence. The troubles in Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland followed directly from the practice of democracy by majorities aiming to exclude minorities from power. And where democracy does not divide a plural society further, the threat of division tends to impair democracy. There are very few functioning democracies in severely divided societies today.

There is much debate, of course, about how to produce democracy in South African conditions. For some, a move from the adversarial institutions that are the hallmark of Anglo-American democracy toward the more consensual institutions of the smaller but socially divided European democracies—such as the Netherlands and Switzerland—is in order. That would mean that, instead of counting heads in parliament, the decisions would be made by according the major parties mutual veto rights. Majorities and minorities would have to agree. For others, a binational state, with black and white components, is the only way out. And those who think there is no way out advocate partition. All of these views have in common considerable skepticism about the British parliamentary institutions by which South Africa's whites govern themselves.

It may be possible to have such adversarial institutions and still have a democracy that respects everybody's interests, but surely it will not be easy. It will require an electoral system and some other mechanisms to encourage moderation on the part of political parties that would otherwise serve only their own racially or ethnically defined clienteles. There are no true solutions to this problem, but there are institutions that do better or

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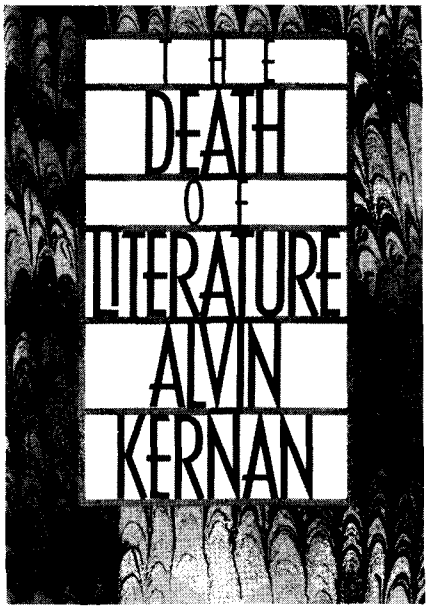

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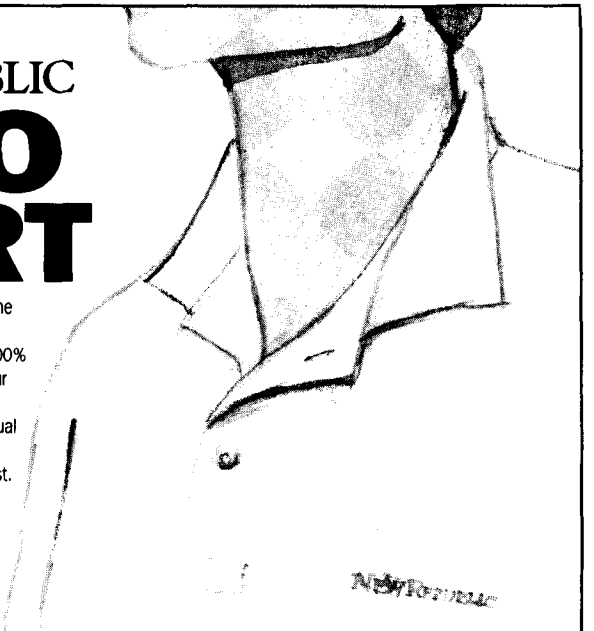

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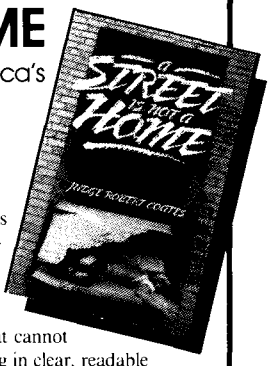

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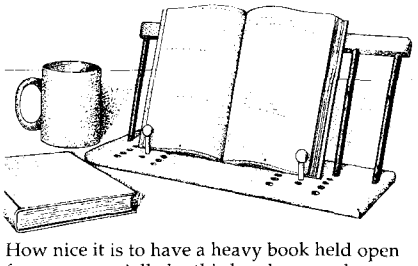

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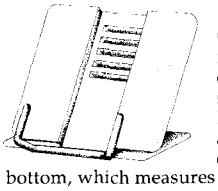

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worse jobs of fostering moderation and accommodation in such conditions. South Africans who speak glibly about the non-racial future tend not to know much about the inability of other societies, some of them less divided than South Africa, to find a formula for accommodating everybody. It will take ingenuity, as well as goodwill, to put the pieces in place for a South Africa that is peaceful, democratic, and tolerant after 300 years of exactly the opposite.

DONALD L. HOROWITZ is the Charles S. Murphy Professor of Law and Professor of Political Science at Duke University. His new book, *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*, will be available next month from the University of California Press.

The Master's Secret

BY JOSEPH LEO KOERNER

The Devil at Isenheim: Reflections of Popular Belief in Grünewald's Altarpiece by Ruth Mellinkoff

(University of California Press, 124 pp., $39.95)

The Isenheim Altarpiece: God's Medicine and the Painter's Vision by Andrée Hayum

(Princeton University Press, 199 pp., $29.95)

In the expressive power of its painting, and in the manic fervor of its piety, Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece effects a visual experience more intense, more explosive, than virtually any other single work of art. Visitors to the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar, France, where the altarpiece has been housed intermittently since 1852, will be unprepared for the sheer brutality of the famous Crucifixion scene. Enlarged to supernatural proportions and spotlighted before a pitch-black sky, the suffering Christ—what the French writer Huysmans memorably termed "Grünewald's morgue Redeemer, his sewer Deity"—is a body all of wounds. Christ's stretched, twisted, nailed, beaten, and thorn-studded flesh is a perfect inventory of the Passion. Portraying each wound as if it were the singular object of a nature study, Grünewald matches his consummate pictorial care to the thorough work of Christ's tormentors.

In German art before Grünewald, there are depictions of martyrdom more violent and more graphic, whole series of images in which Christ submits to every imaginable torment until, in the final stages, he becomes simply a red mass of uncertain contour. Grünewald's more capacious imagination, however, is able also to reverse such degradation, painting in another panel of the altarpiece a risen Christ purged of all suffering, imperfection, and materiality: a body all of light. Between the fair and the foul, the Isenheim Altarpiece assembles the spectrum of human experience, from mourning and inner temptation to love, amazement, and paradisal calm. And this emotional range is inseparable from Grünewald's highly mobile painterly style. His brush can replicate, idealize, or distort, depending on the mood or the meaning of what it depicts, shifting from a microscopic realism in, say, the Crucifixion, to broad, atmospheric effects in the Nativity, or to stark abstraction in the Resurrection.

Such an art is hard to categorize. Painted around 1515 for the Antonite monastery and hospital in Isenheim near Colmar, Grünewald's many-paneled altarpiece is as far removed from the ordered unity and measured beauty associated with "Renaissance" art in Italy as it is from the thorough-going naturalism of contemporary Netherlandish painting. Nor does it share much with the work of Grünewald's more famous German contemporary Albrecht Dürer, who fought precisely to stamp out instability of form and visionary excess through rule, proportion, and decorum.

The singularity of the Isenheim Altarpiece has prompted scholars to focus on the identity of its producer, a task made

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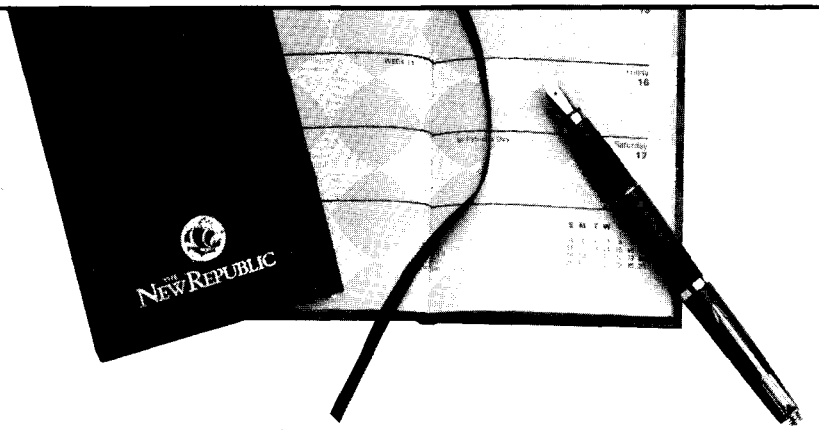
difficult by sparse and baffling evidence. The artist was forgotten soon after his death, and today many believe "Grünewald" to be the false name for a certain painter, engineer, and waterworks expert from Würzburg, Mathis Gothart Nithart. The obscurity of his person, combined with the uniqueness of his painting, intensifies Grünewald's mystique. It accords well with the romantic conception of medieval art as something produced at once anonymously and out of the depths of a personal belief. In the Isenheim Altarpiece, we are told, the nameless but infinitely subjective craftsman fashioned a perfect marriage of painting and piety.

The history of Grünewald's reception recapitulates the fate of "the Middle Ages" generally. After deepening oblivion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and after it was almost destroyed by Napoleon, the Isenheim Altarpiece was rescued from obscurity by the Romantics, who saw in it a symbol for their own reborn Catholic religiosity. Subsequent nostalgia for the life and art of the Middle Ages further heightened Grünewald's stature, until his altarpiece became, early in this century, a totemic object for European culture. Nolde, Beckmann, and Picasso quoted its forms; Rilke, Mann, and Benjamin sung its praises; and Canetti composed *Auto-Da-Fé* in a study plastered with Grünewald reproductions. Jasper Johns continued this tradition of homage by weaving large quotations from the Isenheim Altarpiece into the visual fabric of his recent series *The Seasons*.

Still, like all renascences, the modern taste for the Isenheim Altarpiece seems particularly fragile or historically contingent, as if, because it once fell quickly into oblivion, it could easily do so again. As the aesthetics that variously celebrated the altarpiece—romantic medievalism, modernist primitivism, nationalistic nostalgia—grow distant, what will be questioned may no longer be Grünewald's greatness, but rather the meaning and the function of the notion of greatness itself. There will be a tendency to rehistoricize the altarpiece and its effects, to push it back into the Middle Ages and reject as anachronistic any modern attempt to interpret its aesthetic character (for the altarpiece was produced before the advent of the "aesthetic" as a category of experience). For this reason, the appearance of two books on the Isenheim Altarpiece allows us not merely to assess their achievements, but to take the measure of our own critical culture.

Both Ruth Mellinkoff and Andrée



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Hayum treat the Isenheim Altarpiece monographically, and both therefore reflect a certain faith in the expressive power of a single work of art. And while producing essentially scholarly texts, outfitted with footnotes, diagrams, and indexes, both authors wish to reach a wider audience (hence the investment in attractive color plates). They also share a desire to furnish a total account of the altarpiece, though they differ greatly on what can constitute that totality, and on how it might be achieved.

Mellinkoff's book is a work of traditional iconography, seeking to uncover beneath the image's visible forms its hidden, and usually verbal, content. "A single concept lay behind the whole altarpiece," writes Mellinkoff at the outset. What blocks this concept from view, and what necessitates the iconographer's labor, are the artist's personal style, which defamiliarizes common beliefs and ideas, and time, which forever makes us forget the original meaning of things. Mellinkoff intends neither to pose new questions to the altarpiece, nor to re-evaluate its "greatness," nor to develop a novel methodology; she sets out simply to solve some of its continually vexing semantic puzzles. These solutions generally involve decoding the identity and the meaning of certain objects and figures in the painting.

Hayum's study is rather more ambitious in its aims. She seeks to rediscover the work of art within the fullness of its original historical context, which means moving beyond questions of iconography, style, and function to "such issues as architectural setting, patronage, role within a prescribed ritual practice, and reception by a particular audience." Sometimes Hayum describes this expanded task as a shift from production to reception, or from artist to audience; ideally, she suggests, it should embrace both poles. The authority here belongs not to previous scholars of the Grünewald altarpiece, nor even to Grünewald himself (who is returned to almost total obscurity in Hayum's account), but to a particular method of interpretation.

It is a method guaranteed by a constellation of theorists listed at the work's outset: Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, Natalie Zemon Davis, Walter Ong, Hans Robert Jauss, Michael Baxandall. Hayum styles her book as "the new art history," which for her means a preference for anthropology over traditional history, a mistrust of the objectives and the assumptions of earlier scholars, a commitment to dismantling "art" and "artist" as historically and ideologically motivated categories, and a certain meta-discursive style that makes each case study, no matter how local, seem somehow exemplary for much more—hence Hayum's claim to providing through her book "a relevatory model for the study of the history of art." Although it is too simple to say that Hayum represents the new art history while Mellinkoff represents the old, reading these two books side by side says much about how mainstream art history is practiced these days.

MATTHIAS GRÜNEWALD, *CRUCIFIXION* (ISENHEIM ALTARPIECE, c. 1510-15)

Mellinkoff's argument evolves from one detail at the heart of the altarpiece: a greenish, feathered creature playing a viol beside the Nativity. While he fiddles in concert with two angels and wears dignifying rings of gold and jewels, something about this figure—his cadaverous lips, confused and joyless gaze, and generally wilted look—tells us that all is not well. Yet most scholars identify him positively, as seraph, cherub, exotic angel, or emblem of virtue. Mellinkoff suspects him to be demonic. She sets out to prove that he is Lucifer himself, the once-beautiful and now fallen Prince of Angels.

Testing the significance of every aspect of his appearance, from his feathered body and peacock's crest to the cast of his glance, Mellinkoff establishes her identification skillfully, even thrillingly, and with considerable erudition. Then she works outward, discerning in the altarpiece a pervasive, demonic plot whose agents include not only Lucifer and his fallen cohorts, but also the unbelievers: the pagans and the Jews hidden in Grünewald's symbolism. Their story answers the old question *unde malum*, whence is evil?

Evil began with Lucifer, who for his sinful pride was thrown from heaven only to return as the Serpent of the Fall; Original Sin, which stains us still, is evil's continuance. By stationing Lucifer at the nativity of Christ, Mellinkoff argues, Grünewald invokes both this history and its cosmic cure. For according to a belief commonly held throughout the Middle Ages, Christ's birth and death were a trap set by God to deceive the Devil. In this so-called "ransom theory," Lucifer had claims to the souls of all people through their shared guilt in the Fall. He lost these rights, however, when he tried to haul sinless Christ to hell after the Crucifixion. What fooled the Devil was Christ's hidden divinity, his godhood as concealed by his human incarnation, humble birth, and ignominious death. Mellinkoff finds Lucifer in the thick of this deception, celebrating with his music the birth of a child, but betraying by his baffled gaze a blindness to divine identity.

One of the most disturbing aspects of Mellinkoff's book is the range of evil that it unearths. A chamber pot decorated with Hebrew letters that appears in the Nativity panel becomes, in Mellinkoff's reading, an indictment of the Jews. More than simply a reference to the Jewish people into whose midst the historical Jesus was born, more even than an allusion to Christ's replacement of the Old Law with the New, the inscribed chamber pot visualizes, according to Mellinkoff, the defilement of the Synagogue and the continuing pollution of Grünewald's Jewish contemporaries, who still stubbornly reject Christ. Grünewald's chamber pot, associating Jews with excrement, belongs in the orbit of such popular and vicious images as the *Judensau*, widespread in German visual culture from the thirteenth through the eighteenth centuries in which Jews were depicted sucking at the teats and anus of a giant sow. Mellinkoff suggests specific historical motivations for such imagery in the Isenheim

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Altarpiece: Emperor Maximilian I's expulsion of the Jews from Colmar in 1510 and 1512, the special ubiquity of the *Judensau* image in those areas where Grünewald lived and worked, and so on. She concludes that "Grünewald could not have escaped the brainwashing effect of this pervasive attitude of hatred toward contemporary Jewry."

This is perhaps too weak a formulation. Pogroms such as those in Colmar were frequently initiated by alleging that a Jew had desecrated a Christian image. When the Jews were expelled or murdered, and their property stolen, new images—statues, panel paintings, altarpieces—were set up to glorify and to legitimate such violence. Grünewald is less brainwashed by than complicit in these attitudes. The Devil at Isenheim becomes, from the perspective brilliantly opened by Mellinkoff's work, not merely an evil emplotted within the order of the altarpiece, but also, and more troublingly, an evil pervasive without, in a society that established its order through violence against those it deemed outsiders. As Walter Benjamin, a passionate admirer of Grünewald who was himself a victim of anti-Semitism, wrote: "There has never been a document of culture which was not, at one and the same time, a document of barbarism."

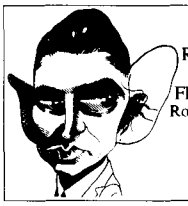
Mellinkoff makes us see this altarpiece differently. She addresses its secrets not merely as isolated symbols to be decoded, but as elements of a compelling plot that, written and expounded, realigns our experience of the whole. The deception of evil by the hidden divinity of Christ is the story that she finds, as it were, hidden at Isenheim. Given the beautiful loop that she has fashioned, it is anticlimactic when she explains, toward the end of her study, that the story lay hitherto concealed from us because of "Grünewald's unconventional methods," or because of our forgetfulness about ancient ideas and prejudices.

Here we reach a limit of the traditional iconographic method—of the view that the work of art, once it is deciphered and reduced to its original historical and largely textual meaning, becomes perfectly transparent, a statement originally known to all, though "ne'er so well expressed." Whatever new art history will be written for Grünewald will certainly be informed by the interpretation of the Isenheim Altarpiece that Mellinkoff alone has found, but her interpretation begs to be taken further, and turned back upon the vision that had eluded us. For our deception about Lucifer, our failure to read him as devil rather than angel, is Grünewald's achievement. It articulates Lucifer's status as fallen beauty; and it is a corollary to the fallen angel himself, who serenades the Christ child because he is deceived by appearances and mistakes his victor for another of his victims. The Isenheim Altarpiece thus becomes a georgic of the eye, a vision showing how fair is foul and foul is fair.

Andrée Hayum put her book into press just before the publication of *The Devil at Isenheim*. For her, the greenish creature is still an angel whose music works "as a curative agent"; and the chamberpot "celebrat[es] the domain of alchemy," its Hebrew inscription acting apotropaically, like "the traditional mezuzah." Comparing Hayum's passage on these points with Mellinkoff's study, I am struck less by the conflict of their interpretations than by their different conceptions of scholarship. Mellinkoff starts with details, surprising us with a new identification, and then illuminates the whole altarpiece through this part. The use of her work rests on the rightness of detail: hence each argument is weighed against every counterargument and defended through copious visual and textual precedents.

Hayum works the other way around. She posits at the outset a "whole" within which Grünewald should be interpreted, and then finds details in the altarpiece that together reiterate this whole. That Hayum nowhere really proves, by the standards that a scholar like Mellinkoff sets for herself, that alchemy, music-therapy, or mezuzahs have anything to do with the Isenheim Altarpiece is unimportant: if one particular argument falls, others will stand, and how they stand will anyway be not as proof but as illustration. What counts is the conception and the scope of this whole, which in Hayum's case seems not to be the altarpiece itself, but the totality of its culture. By "culture," Hayum means something like what Clifford Geertz calls "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life." From such an elevated perspective, issues like iconographic identification, positive historical proof, and vividness of visual observation begin to seem trivial, like things we used to do before we gained this higher ground.

It makes sense, to be sure, particularly after the work of Michael Baxandall, to let a winged, retable altarpiece like Grünewald's validate "contextual" art history. Produced collaboratively by painters, shriners, and sculptors, and often funded corporatively, by guild, city, or monastery, an altarpiece could serve a multitude of different "functions," none of them strictly aesthetic. It might simul-



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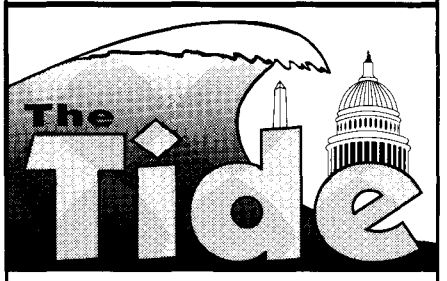

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tancously label the altar's primary dedication, glorify the Eucharist, focus pious meditation, house miraculous relics or icons, assert the prestige of its donors, and generate income from pilgrims. An approach like Mellinkoff's, which hypothesizes "a single concept" behind Grünewald's work as a whole, compromises the necessarily plural significance of the retable altarpiece. For Hayum, this plurality occasions a proliferation of interpretive contexts limited only by the author's energy and the reader's patience.

Hayum's most important and lasting achievement is to bring into proper focus one context that is quite particular to the Isenheim Altarpiece: its place within the hospital order of the Antonites who commissioned it. Hospitals like the one at Isenheim specialized in the treatment of St. Anthony's fire, a painful and disfiguring illness of the poor now known to be caused by bread contaminated by the fungus ergot. Grünewald's altarpiece depicts a victim of gangrenous ergotism among a group of demons, and displays elements of the disease's supposed cures: amputation, medicinal herbs, healing waters, and so on. Drawing on contemporary sources, Hayum proposes that the altarpiece was shown to patients on special days, and was designed as a vehicle of their cure.

This is rich and convincing material, which Hayum had already presented in *The Art Bulletin* in 1977. It is unfortunate that she does not make more of it. We are never told, for example, exactly how painting and medicine were related in practice; nor is the Foucaultian analysis of the Antonite hospital, promised at the outset, ever forthcoming. (This is especially surprising in the light of recent work on medieval conceptions of the body by Peter Brown, Caroline Bynum, and others.) I expected to learn much more about Grünewald's art *in situ*, about how it relates to the specific issues of power, class, gender, and institution in its culture. True, Hayum's sources are limited; but she does not press such evidence as does exist. The Antonite statutes of 1478, for example, contain fascinating rules concerning the food and dress of the ill. Patients were obliged to wear peasants' caps and to expose their wounds to the public. Such practices destabilize Hayum's straightforward model of art "in" context: by turning the patients into a macabre spectacle, they turn the hospital into an extension of the altarpiece.

Instead of developing the full complexity of one strong context, Hayum pursues a number of weaker ones, from exorcism, iconoclasm, and Neoplatonism to orality, the printing press, and synesthesia. They are weak because they never finally seem pertinent to Grünewald's altarpiece in particular. And they force the author into awkward exaggerations (the fact that we possess no prints by Grünewald, for example, becomes his "avoidance of printmaking") and inaccuracies (the assertion that Grünewald's painted inner wings are an exception in Germany ignores altarpieces of artists from Multscher and Witz to Pacher, Herlin, and Holbein the Elder). And her notion that "from Isenheim must come the idea that the medium of painting could best encompass the cosmic realm quintessential for an altarpiece" avoids the unavoidable precedent of Dürer.

The most extraordinary case of contextualism run amok occurs when Hayum attempts to tackle the veritable Holy Grail of Grünewald scholarship, what she terms, variously: "the level of quality in Grünewald's painting and the unusual power of expression," the "visual presence generated by the altarpiece," and the work's "assertion of the visual." Grünewald's art, she argues, was fashioned to be "against the grain" of an art market dominated by sculpture, of a society increasingly iconoclastic, and of a "visual culture confining itself increasingly to the page." What is unique and radical about Grünewald, however, is not that he painted, but how he painted.

That he does not fit into Hayum's contexts says little about Grünewald, but much about Hayum. Having invoked what are indeed relevant contexts, she is forced to hypostatize the work of art as a resistance to context, and in the end her analysis starts to sound like an unreflective affirmation of the autonomy of art: Grünewald's altarpiece, we read, "reveals itself in an immanent occurrence . . . beyond the text, beyond narration and strict illustration, and in the nature of presence itself." Such statements make me appreciate all the more Mellinkoff's controlled, unpretentious, always honest, and finally far more useful reading of the Isenheim Altarpiece.

Hayum is much stronger when she reviews the history of the Isenheim Altarpiece's reception in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Grünewald's various modern champions are each analyzed contextually, and her chronicle of the bygone enthusiasms of Europe's artists and intellectuals is both entertaining and highly informative. For the painter Arnold Böcklin, Grünewald was the forbidden but tempting fruit in the garden of classicism. For Max Beckmann and others, he was a precursor of Expressionism and the embodiment of a specifically German style. For Huysmans, he represented the "intensity of early Christian commitment" set off against the decadence and corruption of Huysmans's modern age. And in the interwar period generally, Grünewald's Germanness focused the question of the political status of Alsace-Lorraine.

Hayum's insistence that ideology motivates interpretation is, for most of her material, wholly persuasive. Sometimes it leads her astray, however, as when she bizarrely asserts about the great Jewish art historian Erwin Panofsky that his "escalating privilege in American academe succeeded in anesthetizing his personal fears, wounds, and sense of outrage about events in Nazi Germany." Such a statement is only comprehensible as the reflection of the very narrow concerns of professional academics in 1990. Indeed, throughout her account of the reception of the Isenheim Altarpiece, I was struck by her own emphatically contemporary voice, with its distrust of power in any form, its faith in method over matter, its thorough historicism, and its skepticism toward the aesthetic. In the end it made me think that what convinced Benjamin, Picasso, Rilke, and Mann convinces still today, that neither traditional iconography nor a newer art history has yet been fully adequate to this sublimity of content.

JOSEPH LEO KOERNER teaches art history at Harvard University. His most recent book is *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* (Yale University Press).

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

No-run Homer

YALE PROFESSORS CAN'T JUST BE baseball fans. They have to be epic poets of The Summer Game. The mantle of the late A. Bartlett Giamatti has passed to the current dean of Yale College, Donald Kagan, who criticizes George Will's best-selling book, *Men at Work: The Craft of Baseball*, in the latest issue of *The Public Interest*. Kagan, the author of a four-volume history of the Peloponnesian War, argues that Will's interpretation of baseball is overly rationalistic and intellectual. Where Will admires smart players, like Cal Ripken of the Orioles, Kagan the classicist prefers non-intellectual, power-hitting titans who "perform great and wondrous deeds, so marvelous that they verge on the magical." Like Giamatti, Kagan finds the game's metaphor in Homer's *Odyssey*. "The batter is its hero. He begins at home, but his mission is to venture away from it, encountering various unforeseeable dangers," he writes. "At each station opponents scheme to put him out by strength or skill or guile. Should they succeed he dies on the bases, defeated. If his own heroic talents are superior, however, he completes the circuit and returns victorious to home, there to be greeted with joy by the friends he left behind." Kagan compares the fight between the Yankees and Dodgers in the early 1950s to the Trojan War. The part of Achilles is played by Joe DiMaggio, who like his progenitor suffered from a heel injury. This stuff is more or less its own parody, but it's hard to resist the idea of Kagan as color man at this year's World Series. His play-by-play might have gone something like this: Noble Canseco sulks in the on-deck circle, nursing his bitter anger at the foes of Cincinnatus. Soon may the field ring with the terrible clamor of his oaken shaft and the beer-dark bleachers cry out in agony. Batter ready. Pitcher winds up. But lo! Behold the runner at first depart his station, speeding like fleet-footed Mercury. Sing, o muse, of cunning Henderson, skilled in all the arts of base-stealing. Too slow, alas, he is caught between swirling Scylla and treacherous Charybdis. Tagged at second by quick-fingered Duncan, scourge of the Achaeans. Terrible now are the cries of the sons of Oakland, scoreless after six. Now a word from our Olympians. . . .

GEORGE WILL REPLIES IN THE same issue of the quarterly with an attack on what he refers to as "The Romantic Fallacy in Baseball." There may be something of a pot and kettle problem here. Will, it cannot be forgotten, is the columnist who wrote in reference to the film *Bull Durham* that "baseball, properly practiced and appreciated, is a form and object of love, and thus touches, at least tangentially, all of life's great themes." A few years earlier, he noted that "baseball, like [Casey] Stengel's long life of peaks and valleys, is like spring itself. It illustrates regeneration, resurrection, and life's second chances." Will escapes Kagan's dithyrambic fever only to fall prey to his own brand of sententious sentimentality. If Kagan wants to be baseball's Homer, Will is fast becoming its Leo Buscaglia.

AROUND THE END OF REGULAR season play, Dan Quayle addressed a luncheon meeting of the Hudson Institute. "Quite frankly, teachers are the only profession that teach our children," he told the assembled guests. This unexceptionable if Zen-like utterance was followed by comments that were somewhat less coherent. "It is a unique profession," the vice president continued, "and, by golly, I hope that when they go into the teaching field that they do have that zeal and they do have that mission and they do believe in teaching our kids and they're not getting into this just as a job or a way to put food on the table." Quayle was defending the position that paying teachers more money won't solve our education problems. This is probably true. But the overall thrust of Quayle's speech was that the trouble with our schools is the lack of market incentives. Isn't there a contradiction here? On the one hand, "our school system is declining because it is a centrally planned economy." On the other hand, money won't buy better teachers. It's fine for the veep to say that no one should go into teaching out of sheer lust for lucre—which, in any case, would be like going into investment banking for the joy of helping others. It is slightly ridiculous for him to demand, however, that teachers be saints unaffected by the otherwise universal principle of economic self-interest. Thank goodness the vice presidency isn't the only profession that teaches logic to our children.

ON THE SUBJECT OF HIGHER EDucation, Quayle is somewhat more sound. In an interview in the current issue of *Campus*, a slick new national student newspaper sponsored by the folks who brought you *The Dartmouth Review*, he comes out against the "free speech" codes that some universities have adopted in a misguided attempt to quell expressions of racism and sexism. Quayle acquits himself fairly well in his answers. The questions, it must be admitted, were not the toughest. At one point, student journalist Patrick Gardner, a junior at Vassar, tried to stump him with this one: "I have gotten a sense from speaking with many students that you are popular among young people and especially among conservative young people. Why do you think this is?" Sam Donaldson, watch out.

THE RISING TIDE OF LIBERAL INtolerance is not limited to universities, or confined to the liberal arts. A case in point is the episode of the wonderfully named Forrest M. Mims III and *Scientific American*. The editors were extremely pleased with several pieces Mims wrote for the magazine's "Amateur Scientist" column. According to Charles Trueheart of *The Washington Post*, they were about to offer him the column on a permanent basis, which Mims described as his "lifelong ambition." Then, during a final interview, Mims told the magazine's editor, Jonathan Piel, that among the other magazines he contributed to were some Christian publications. Mims was then asked about his views on abortion, and whether he believed in Darwin's theory of evolution. Mims said he was anti-abortion, and a creationist to boot. Piel then retracted the job offer, and agreed to publish columns Mims had already written only after he signed a waiver promising not to sue the magazine. The "Amateur Scientist" column is written for hobbyists who make pinhole cameras and such in their basements. It has nothing to do with evolutionary theory. But the editors reportedly felt that hiring Mims would lend legitimacy to the creationist case. "There's no question that on their own merits your columns are fabulous. . . . I trust you. You're a man of honor and integrity," Piel said in a phone conversation surreptitiously recorded by Mims (which makes you wonder about the honor and integrity part). "It's the public relations nightmare that's keeping me awake." Now the magazine has a real public relations nightmare on its hands, and well it should. Of course, *Scientific American* has the right to hire or not hire whatever columnists it chooses on the basis of their views. But after speaking with Mims and reading a few of his columns, I'm convinced the editors did him a serious injustice. Mims is neither a biblical literalist who believes the universe is 6,000 years old, nor is he a proselytizer. He is someone whose religion compels him to believe that God created man. Why that should disqualify him from writing about "Sunspots And How To Observe Them Safely," I can't imagine.

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